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Calvinist Contact

An independent Christian weekly

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Human encounter in South Africa a mustard seed

Robert VanderVennen

TORONTO — "Mamelodi" is the name of a South African mustard seed which, against all odds, is still alive and growing.

Mamelodi is the name of one of those infamous black townships where South Africa keeps the blacks it uses for cheap labour in the cities. This one is outside of Pretoria, the nation's capital.

Last year some Christian white people got together with some Christian black people living in Mamelodi to arrange for nearly 200 white Christians from all over South Africa to live in the homes of black Christians for four days, so they could come to know each other as persons and as fellow believers, while about 50 black Christians lived with white families in Pretoria.

The people who participated in these visits found their experience "rich and wonderful," overcoming tenseness and apprehension during the four days, so that by the time they left they felt relaxed and very much at home.

This was a remarkable experiment because, although black and white people in South Africa have many contacts, often the contacts are superficial and marked by the assumed superiority of one people over the other.

See **SOUTH** — p. 2.

Thinkbit

The newspapers, like the churches, would be in a poor way if there were no wickedness in the world.

From: *Leaven of Malice* **by Robert Davies**

Applying God's Word to God's World
February 1988 $2.00
Trading Frenzy
Will We Learn From 1929?
Jack Eckerd's Camp of Hope
Big Business Courts the New Age

Eternity, a highly regarded American evangelical monthly is closing shop.

Respected evangelical magazine folds

Marian Van Til

PHILADELPHIA, Penn. — *Eternity,* one of the most highly regarded and broadly scoped evangelical monthlies in North America, is shutting down after 38 years of publication, the magazine's owners have announced. Its last issue will be that dated January 1989.

Financial problems resulting from a "short-fall in advertising revenue, weak circulation growth and declining renewal rates" have been cited as the reasons for the closure.

Eternity was begun in 1950 by the late Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse as a voice to and for evangelicals. In recent years, the magazine has had a glossy format similar to the major news weeklies (*Maclean's, Time, Newsweek*) and included much of the same kind of content but from a mainstream evangelical perspective — news, news analysis, features on news makers and issues, reviews on the arts and a large and comprehensive book review section. The magazine has addressed primarily the American scene but also international affairs.

Prior to April 1988, *Eternity* was owned and operated by Evangelical Ministries International (EMI), an independent ministry which also produced a widely-heard radio program, "The Bible Study Hour."

No turn-around?

Last spring EMI decided to sell *Eternity* to the Foundation for Christian Living (FCL), a group based in Pawling, New York, which produces various Christian publications. It was thought that *Eternity's* already declining fortunes could be turned around. That didn't seem to be happening, however, though Lois Sibley, one of *Eternity's* six editorial personnel, points out that from April to December is not a long time to observe any possible turn-around trend.

"With a magazine like *Eternity,* you have to keep promoting all the time," Sibley explains. "Our advertising depended a lot on book advertising. But Christian book publishers are not putting a lot of money into advertising these days."

Sibley cites a possible reason for the decline in the number of *Eternity's* readers — from a high of more than 50,000 to 33,164 last month: "I suspect (this is my personal opinion) that the average lay person maybe thinks it's a little too intellectual. And a lot of the academic types who read it read it in libraries rather than subscribing."

See *ETERNITY* — p. 2

Nova Scotia harvests largest apple crop in 40 years

Anne Hutten

KENTVILLE, N.S. — Although final estimates of the crop are not yet in, Nova Scotia's fruit growers harvested their crop since the years immediately following WW2. During their annual meeting, members of the N.S. Fruit Growers Association (NSFGA) heard estimates ranging up to four million bushels of apples. Predictably, the size of the crop has strained storage facilities in the Annapolis Valley, where practically all the fruit is grown.

The province's apple industry has seen several major changes this year. First, the Canvin plant at Wolfville, which processed apple juice, was closed. In July, it was bought by J.B. Foods, an Ontario processor which renovated and expanded the facilities to handle more volume. By December, its Executive Vice-President, Bob Jantz, reported he expected to process a million bushels of apples before the winter is over.

Meanwhile, the financially troubled Scotian Gold Co-op tried to get more financial help from government, but was told to sell its processing plant to its main competitor, Cobi Foods Inc. After Co-op members stalled the sale long enough to work a better deal, Cobi agreed to buy the plant.

See **OVER** — p. 3

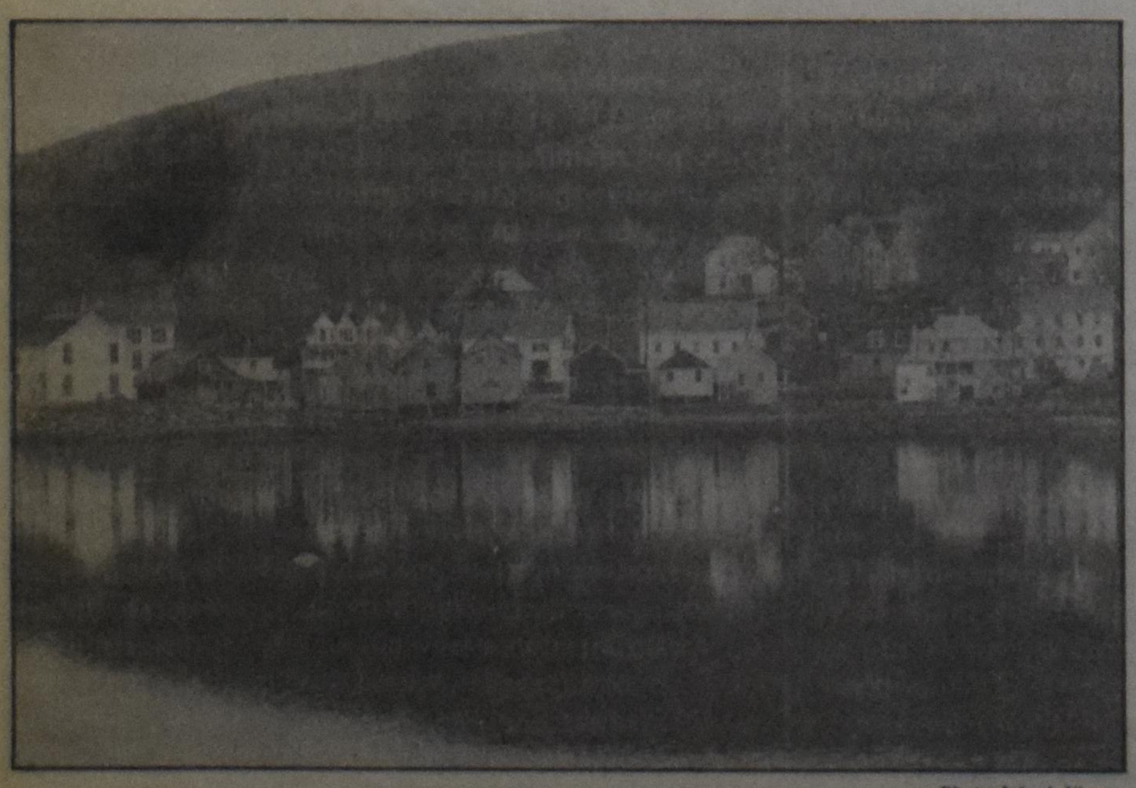

Photo: John de Visser

Annapolis Royal is the shipping centre for the Annapolis Valley's apple industry.

In this issue:

Buying groceries at a Nigerian market requires care . . . . . p. 10
A rockbound cemetery in Jordan attracts tourists . . . . . p. 11
Can the CRC be both Reformed and Canadian? . . . . . pp. 12,13
B.C. churches question content of VanderZalm's ethics . . . . . p. 14

South African people feel helpless

... continued from page 1.
Blacks and whites live as "two solitudes" in the fullest sense.

"Mamelodi Encounter" signals racial reconciliation

Word of the good feelings generated by what is now called the Mamelodi Encounter has spread throughout the nation, so that now the offices of the sponsors, who call themselves "The National Initiative for Reconciliation," are being flooded with requests of others for visits, and with invitations from people in other places to visit them.

Two men from Pietermaritzburg, for example, Nellis du Preez and Mbulelo Hina, are investigating the possibility of a smaller "experience" in the troubled Pietermaritzburg townships, about which we read so much in the news. They are exploring a weekend visit at first as a test for a larger encounter.

In Cape Town two pastors, one black and one white, are in the early stages of organizing something similar for Cape Town. The Rev. Canon Andrew Jantjies has been assigned by the Anglican Church to set up Mamelodi experiences in the Eastern Cape area, and he now has some 240 people involved with him.

These live-in experiences are seen as an alternative to continuing to have endless conferences of blacks and whites at which racial issues are discussed. Many people in South Africa feel helpless in the face of their overwhelming racial problems. They know that major changes are coming and are desperately afraid for themselves and the country they love.

Another kind of spinoff that has come from the Mamelodi encounter is the action of Jean Timm, a teacher at Epworth, a private school for white girls in Pietermaritzburg. When she expressed her feeling of helplessness to her bishop, he suggested visits of high school girls. So Timm invited 30 students from a black high school to spend an afternoon at Epworth, and later they visited the black high school. They have now met together four times in the past year.

The whites in South Africa are in much the same situation as the Egyptians when they began to fear the latent power in the overwhelming numbers of Old Testament Israelites, said Michael Cassidy, chairman and co-founder of the Mamelodi Christian Encounter in a recent address to its supporters. When Moses saw the burdens of his people, he killed an Egyptian. But fear comes in the door with killing, and death and fear start a spiral, said Cassidy.

Moses spent 40 years in the Midian wilderness to learn that "the transcendent power belonged to God and not to him. We need to go deeper with God and with each other." He concluded with a reference to the groups that Africaners fear most: "I have never been involved in a Christian activity that was destroyed by Communists, Marxists, free lovers, neo-pagans, Buddhists or Moslems. The only Christian endeavours I have ever been in that got destroyed, got destroyed by other Christians. We can't afford that!"

The growing number of people of both races taking part in The National Initiative for Reconciliation do not believe that their action will solve their country's racial problems. But they are acting at a level where they can do something, acting out of the conviction that even though their action is only the size of a mustard seed, racial conflict must not only be dealt with politically but especially at the level of human understanding.

Christian action, they believe, must also be human action, and political change can only be effective when it is rooted in a national change of heart.

Eternity not eternal

... continued from page 1.

Sibley also believes that if American evangelicals want to read one — and just one — major Christian paper, in recent years they have been more likely to choose *Christianity Today* than *Eternity*.

The news of the shut-down has come as a surprise to many in the evangelical and Reformed world. *Eternity's* December 1988 made no mention of ceasing publication, and in fact, contained cards for gift subscriptions for the coming year. "I don't know how it could happen so suddenly," admits Lois Sibley. "It's a business decision. It was made after the December issue went to press."

On November 10, 1988, FCL editor-in-chief Eric J. Fellman notified EMI of the FCL board's decision to cease publication, effective after the January 1989 issue. At that point, EMI had the opportunity to buy back the magazine, but after much discussion rejected the option. An "extensive search" to locate another publisher for the paper was futile. But just in case, the monthly may some-day be resurrected, EMI has sought control of the Eternity name.

Sibley and the other five editors all are looking for new jobs. "It's like having a friend die," she muses, a catch in her voice. "You go through all the stages of grief; now we're at 'acceptance,' I think. You can look back in hindsight and say, 'We could have done this,' or 'That could have been tried,' but all we can do is trust God. I feel He must have allowed this for a reason. We'll have to trust him to see what that is."

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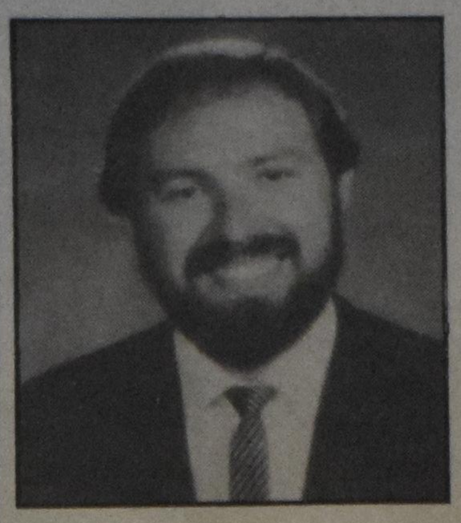
BETWEEN THE LINES

Socio-political comment by Syd Hielema, Clarence Joldersma, Gus Polman.



Making people think

Mathematics makes a person think. It led me to think about why my students (and all of our society) learn the kind and amount of math they do.

Imaginary numbers triggered this thought. A few days ago in my senior math course I introduced the idea of imaginary numbers. I explained that though these numbers are real enough, they do not belong to the group of numbers called "real," and thus they are called "imaginary."

This, of course, is a subtle distinction and can easily be missed, even by bright people. The notion of imaginary numbers, I fear, was missed by a few of my students that day and led many to pose the students' age old question: "What is this good for?" Although I'm usually thick-skinned about this question, I paused with it this time. Why should students learn such math? What is its value and function?

The light of logic

My own high school math teacher reasoned that mathematics taught reasoning skills. Since math is the most rigorous, exact, and clear example of logic, it most obviously teaches clear thinking. A person needs only to learn the proper rules, apply them in the proper situation, and follow them as prescribed. This will inevitably lead to the correct answer (which can be found in the back of the text book).

Others have given a different reason. They maintain that mathematics is practical and has many applications in various occupations: engineering, economics, actuarial science, statistics, and so forth. Even carpenters use the Pythagorean theorem once in a while to calculate rafter lengths. Math has many applications.

Although good cases can be made for both — thinking and applications — they fall short of satisfying my students' exasperated question. Few high school graduates actually apply the mathematics they learn there. Most use only arithmetic: adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing. For most of us, abstract algebra, trigonometry, functions, and geometry lie somewhere in our mind's dusty memory bin.

I fear those things do not greatly help our every-day reasoning. No issue — e.g., ozone depletion, euthanasia, for whom to vote, free trade — can be solved by knowing and applying clear-cut rules of thinking and coming up with the correct answer. Thinking through problems in other areas of life is much more complicated and difficult than solving problems in math.

Then why take math in school? We should re-think that question.

There seems to be another reason, one that is embedded in the history of Western civilization and one that is hidden from our view. Back around 500 BC, the ancient Greeks lost confidence in their gods. Their certainty in the gods had disintegrated. As a result, they needed and searched for a new source of certainty in which they could put their trust. Their religious trust shifted to *reason*.

Pervasive legacy

The Greeks passed on this search and their answer to it to Western civilization and our society. In modern times, the 17th century mathematician Rene Descartes was a major figure in holding up mathematics as the best example of clear reasoning and the best way to find certainty in this world.

A major motive for developing math in our society is that it gives us sure knowledge and certain truth. Math (it is thought), more than any other source of knowledge, represents certainty. And some people point to the blossoming of science — especially physics and technology — as proof that mathematical certainty provides fruits. Thus math is given a very important place in our society and civilization, and therefore also in our schools.

On a deeper level, then, it seems that high schools teach the amount and kind of math they do because of our society's religious trust in math's certainty. Our society, like that of the ancient Greeks, has largely replaced its religious trust in God with an equally religious trust in (mathematized) reasoning.

So we make sure that our students take a lot of very abstract and sophisticated math. Makes a person think, doesn't it?

Clarence Joldersma teaches science and math at Smithville Christian High School, Smithville, Ont.

Pressreview

Carl D. Tuyl

Just as a bachelor unfamiliar with the intricacies of a washing machine will turn his T-shirt inside out to give the appearance of cleanliness, Premier Bourassa did the old inside-outside trick with French and English. The clean French goes outside, and hidden from view, the dirty English stuff goes inside. It took a bit of constitutional juggling, but it seemed like a workable compromise. As with all compromises, however, nobody was satisfied, and Premier Bourassa found himself in a no-win situation. It will not make passage of the Meech Lake accord in Manitoba or New Brunswick any easier. Manitoba's Conservative premier would dearly love to approve the accord, but the opposition might outvote him. The Liberal leader there, Sharon Carstairs, as well as the provincial NDP want to introduce amendments. Passage of the accord by all provincial legislative assemblies should be done before mid-1990, otherwise the accord will go the way of overripe tomatoes.

★★★★

In the meantime, back at the House of Commons things were not much quieter or easier than they were in LaBelle Province. Monsieur not only has to deal with a very cantankerous opposition, he also has to arbitrate in a tug-of-war in his cabinet, where, like the sons of Zebedee, Michael Wilson and John Crosbie fight for the right to appoint the Canadian members of the trade treaty appeal panel. There are also rumours of tension between Western and Quebec members of the Conservative caucus.

★★★★

Both Mr. Turner and Mr. Broadbent are experiencing evaluations with large question marks from within the ranks of their respective parties, and in apparent defence they have cranked up the acrimoniousness in the House a couple of degrees. The government's hope that a post-election, pre-holiday wave of goodwill would settle on the House was as vain as any effort to empty the Bay of Fundy with a teaspoon.

★★★★

Mr. Arthur Snider was dismissed from the Camp Hill Hospital in Halifax because he reached the age of 65. Snider did not take kindly to that gesture and he appealed to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court which ruled that his release was discriminatory on the basis of age and contrary to the stipulations of Nova Scotia's Human Rights Acts. Arthur Snider had now resumed his employment at the hospital. Good for him!

★★★★

President-elect Bush is busy composing his cabinet. Rumours that any surplus personnel will be shipped to Ottawa under terms of the free trade deal are absolutely false.

★★★★

Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou is an optimist. He is 69 years old, he underwent open heart surgery, and is having an affair with a woman half his age. His government is plagued with scandals and yet he introduced his budget (with an increased deficit) as a motion of confidence, and he won. The budget passed. Nothing risked, nothing gained.

★★★★

The *Toronto Star* editorial page gave some lovely examples of "doublespeak." Workers at a Chrysler plant found out that a new "career alternative enhancement program" meant that the plant was being closed, and they were out of a job. A stockbroker described the October '87 stockmarket crash as "a fourth quarter equity retreat," and the Pentagon refers to dead soldiers as "inoperative combat personnel." I presume a defrocked minister is "an inoperative hermeneutic church official."

★★★★

The U.S. has started to talk with the PLO much to the dismay of Israel, which is still ruled by a caretaker government because the parties cannot agree on a coalition. Arafat looked a bit out of place waving the olive branch of peace; somewhat like a priest in a nun's habit. Or maybe like a plumber in the Sahara. Olive branches are not the PLO's usual tools.

★★★★

The Bulgarian government has offered a ten-day vacation to anyone who will kill mice by hand. It is not known how many mice have to be killed to earn the 10-day vacation. The government discourages the use of pesticides.

★★★★

And so we begin another year: 1989. May it bring us all what is good for us: no more three-minute eggs, no more than two cups of coffee a day, no disposable diapers, no saturated fats, no sugar on our cornflakes, and no pigs' tails in the peasoup. All that stuff is bad for us. What we need is unsaturated fats, unrefined sugar, but a bit more refined dialogue, seven-minute eggs and 20-minute sermons, fibre like that in carrots, exercise such as push-ups, and peace as in no war wherever. So go slow on the cholesterols, easy on fats, but heavy on the walking instead of driving. And above all have HOPE.

Carl Tuyl is pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Kingston, Ont.

Overproduction plagues apple growers

... continued from page 1.

Then, during the NSFGA meeting, growers were told first that Cobi Foods itself was listed for sale, then told by its newly elected president that it was not for sale. The next day, government announced a $6 million loan to Cobi to help cover the purchase of Scotian Gold's plant, and for operating expenses. Spokesmen for the industry generally agree that processors have been losing money.

Growers have watched the financial dealings with more than the usual concern, since a market for their fruit is essential, and more than half the crop goes into processing plants. Some growers report they've barely broken even on the portion of fruit that is sold fresh, normally the more lucrative end of the business. During the past several years, many orchard farms have been listed for sale, while a number of growers have taken off-farm jobs.

The industry's woes stem primarily from world-wide overproduction of apples. This year, Nova Scotia was able to harvest its crop reasonably well because drought had cut yields elsewhere across North America. For example, sizable volumes of processing fruit were shipped to Quebec, Ontario and the U.S.A. Most years, however, the province's production is dwarfed by massive crops elsewhere.

Russia grows 7,500,000 tonnes of apples each year, China, over four million tonnes, U.S.A., over three-and-a-half million tonnes. Southern hemisphere countries such as New Zealand and Chili compete on North American apples with their Granny Smiths, while Washington State and British Columbia ship Red Delicious across the continent as well.

Nova Scotia's growers are currently looking at three possibilities for survival. First, they are testing improved strains of apple varieties in hopes of pleasing the consumer. Second, they will call yet another vote on a marketing board, after a previous vote during August failed by only a few points.

Third, a national apple agency is being proposed by Ontario and B.C. If implemented within the next few years, it would presumably have the power to limit imports, freeze new plantings, and set minimum prices to growers.

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Calvinist Contact

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Editorial

His rule keeps on growing in 1989

Last month I listened to a tape recording of nine lessons and carols from the Anglican tradition. One phrase caught my attention, as a young boy sent it ringing through the cathedral: "And of the increase of his government there shall be no end." What a fantastic claim, I thought to myself. What a statement to make towards the end of 1988. I had heard the scripture passage many a time, but this business about there being no end to the increase had never struck me before.

Right now it's the first month of 1989, and I can still hear that boy's almost shrill but clear voice, and that wondrous proclamation: no end to the increase of Christ's rule. How unlike anyone else's rule! The Kingdom keeps on growing. The stone, while gathering no moss, is swelling and in the process of filling the whole earth.

Show me

Where is the evidence of the increase of Christ's rule? I asked myself. Can anyone demonstrate that increase from the newspapers? Is it perhaps noticeable in the improvement of the political climate in the Soviet Union, on the border between Iran and Iraq, in the hall where United States emissaries are talking with representatives of the PLO? Is any improvement of conditions on earth a sign of the growing Kingdom?

Something tells me that that is not necessarily so. It *may* be so. We certainly can't discount the possibility that glasnost is indirect evidence of the kingship of Christ. But the way Jesus talked about the Kingdom, the increase of his rule has to do more with the increase of righteousness than with the mere loosening of totalitarian restrictions, or the lessening of tensions between nations.

Whatever and wherever the signs are, we have much reason to be positive about the way things are shaping up around us. Either through or in spite of things happening in the world, the Kingdom of Heaven is getting stronger and closer.

More like hell

That not everyone shares this view of reality can be demonstrated by alluding to a plaque cemented into the outside wall of the parental home of Dutch philosopher Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677). I assume the inscription on the plaque to be one of Spinoza's own observations. Translated, it reads as follows:

If only everyone were wise
And wished each other well,
This earth would be a paradise;
Now it's more like a hell.

How's that for a countervailing message to the proclamation of the growing rule of Christ?

I'm sure that all of us from time to time feel like Spinoza did. Pictures and stories about pollution, life in prison, the experience of a marriage breaking up, the pain afflicted by prodigal children, the death of a loved one can make us feel so low, so unhappy, that hell seems a lot closer than paradise. The sad thing about this intermezzo called the years of our Lord is that hell manifests itself in many people's lives, even as the Kingdom advances.

Some people try to escape the experience of hell by a stubborn refusal to acknowledge that we have lost paradise for good. I must tell you about an incident that took place about 80 years ago in Holland. It involved a minister who later served the church of my childhood for 23 years. I was in his beginner catechism class the last year he was our pastor.

The new international

This pastor used to visit a group of polder workers who had strong socialist leanings. He would look for them in their dreary barracks during the evening. One time he asked them if they wanted to sing. Dumb question. There was no enthusiasm for singing after a hard day's work, and certainly no inclination to sing pious songs. He then asked them if they knew the *International* (the song which communists sing all over the world). O yes, they did. And suddenly these workers came alive and sang about the coming rule of the proletariat. They more or less sang in defiance of this diminutive, "over-righteous" preacher *(fijne dominee)*.

When they had finished, the pastor told them that he knew a second "International." And before they knew it, he started singing the well-known Dutch hymn "Er ruist langs de wolken." In English the lyrics go something like this:

The sound of a most dear name sweeps through the clouds,
a name which draws heaven and earth together into one.
No name is sweeter and better for the heart.
It's like salve on wounds, and it stills all pain.
Don't you know that name yet?
It belongs to him who left heaven to redeem us.

The surprising thing was that he got the men to sing along with him. These same rough characters who a few minutes earlier had blared out their utopian vision of a worker's paradise were now praising the name that unites heaven and earth. I think that evening the Kingdom of Christ was showing signs of increase in those grim barracks.

With eyes of faith

Even today we can see signs of this increase of Christ's rule in the work of the church, especially in the third world, in the lives of believers, in the continuous growth of the church as new generations of sinners repent, in the power of the Word and Spirit as it continues to shape and reshape society through individuals and organizations. However imperfectly the work is done, wherever and whenever the rule of Satan is pushed back, it means that the rule of Christ is taking over (Geerhardus Vos: *The Kingdom and the Church)*.

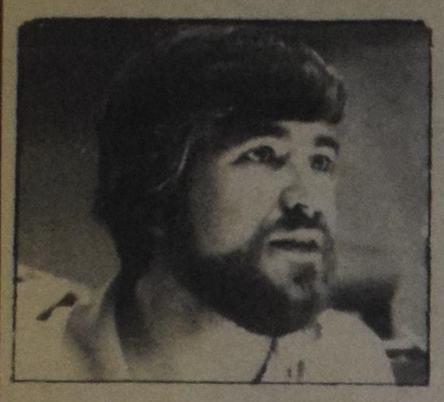
But something also tells me that the increase of Christ's government is largely invisible to us because it is so much more than what we can see and sometimes so different from what we expect. Also, most of it lies in the future. It belongs to those things described in Hebrews 11 — things we welcome from a distance but cannot really see. And as with all things we hope for but cannot see, faith is the only evidence available to us.

Ultimately, then, it takes eyes of faith to see that there is no end to the increase of the government of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith knowledge is not make-belief knowledge. It has that quality of inner certainty and wisdom that proves itself to the children of light so many times and in so many ways, it might just as well be written in stone, just like Spinoza's words.

Except that this stone, unlike Spinoza's stone plaque, will not be imprisoned by bricks and mortar and will not erode. Nor will the year of our Lord 1989 for those who expect the Kingdom to fill the whole earth.

BW

JUST A MOMENT/HERMAN PRAAMSMA



"Happy New Year!"

(Herman Praamsma, 1944 — ?)

We've entered a brand-new year again. Actually, as you read these lines you will have used a few days of the new 1989 already. All the same, I want to use the opportunity to give you a *present* for the New Year, so that it may be really new and exciting!

I have in front of me a little booklet which could affect the way you live together as church families and which could "renew" the face of your congregation in this new year. It is called "Small Groups That Work" and is published by Christian Reformed Home Missions under the rubric, *Church Development Resources.*

This little gem describes in great detail how your church can become a more sharing and caring community through the utilization of small groups.

In an age of individualism and increasingly impersonal relationships it is so important to know again the warmth and closeness of the body of Christ in a setting where it becomes evident that people care for each other, pray with and for each other, study God's Word together, share their joys and fears and offer mutual support in times of need and crisis.

Small groups — in my own experience — are a beautiful way to draw people close and make them feel part of the larger body. They make it possible for God's people to feel like members of a family, whether it is while singing around a living room piano, while challenging another small group to a volleyball game, or going carolling together.

Unique, enriching

There is a unique and enriching way in which such groups make people feel responsible for each other and involved with each other. Some churches, in fact, are using small group settings as their main tool for pastoral care, not only through the presence of an elder and/or deacon in each group, but through the ministry that members are engaged in for each other.

The little booklet that I told you about costs only pennies; I would like to think that it could make a great introduction to groups that could change the face of your church life. It includes sections entitled: "What Are Small Groups Good For?"; "Requirements for Healthy Small Groups"; "How to Start a Small Group"; "Practical Problems and How to Avoid Them"; "Strengthening the Small Group."

What a nice way for a church council to acquaint itself with the concept, what a practical guide for those who would like to implement this way of being "church" together, and what positive re-inforcement for those who already know the joys of small groups!

As I started out saying, we've entered a brand-new year again. Think of it as new opportunities given by the Lord, who wants his church to keep on growing, vibrant and alive, also in this Year of our Lord 1989. And receive my little present in the spirit in which it is offered: as a sincere wish for your well-being and growth.

Let me know how it works out.

Herman Praamsma is pastor of Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, Rexdale, Ont.

Longer Letter

A Christian party and our Christian witness

I once attended a meeting of the Christian Heritage Party, but did not become a member. Had this party started some decades earlier, I would have joined. But now I did not sign up.

I also did not vote for the CHP candidate in my riding. I did not know him, but I did read that at his nomination meeting Margaret Thatcher was held up as the ideal for a Christian candidate. I don't quite agree with that, as she during her reign reduced the taxes of the average rich person by $35,000.00, while increasing the load on the poor. Not quite a Christian approach, in my eyes.

But that is not my objection to the CHP. I have some more deep-seated misgivings about a Christian political party.

No earthly kingdoms

In my opinion a political party can only function when it seeks power. And to achieve this it must fight on the terms of the world. In connection with this power seeking, I think the Bible has something to say.

First, we see in the Bible, especially on the part of Jesus' disciples, an urge to seek power, not for the sake of power, I am sure, but to promote their idea of the Kingdom. When they saw Jesus' gifts, they probably said to one another, "Look, if He can furnish food by a flick of his finger and cure the wounded or even raise to life our fallen heroes, that would solve most of our problems if we ever fight these Romans."

But Jesus wanted none of that. He totally discouraged any attempts to use his power for the purpose of establishing an earthly kingdom. And no wonder, throughout history nothing has done more damage to the cause of Christianity than kingdom building done in the name of the Christian religion. Christ himself became a victim of it, and need I mention the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Thirty Years' War?

Growing together

What then is Christ's message? Let's take a look at some parables. The parable of the weeds, for instance.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sows good seed in his field," (Matt. 13:24) but while he and his helpers are at home, earning a well-deserved rest, the enemy comes, at night, and sows weeds among the wheat. The servants, naturally upset about these low tactics want to eradicate this evil at once. But the farmer seems to have another strategy in mind, one that does not involve fighting a minor action, but winning the entire war. The thrust of the parable is that the evil is to be suffered until the final harvest. When the servants keep on protesting, the farmer says, "If you pull up evil, you pull up goodness right along with it. Let them grow together until the harvest."

The message of this parable is that the Kingdom has a force of its own. It really does not need our help. It is sown, sprouts and bears fruit, and all the weeds in the world haven't got a finger to lift against it.

No threat

What has this parable to do with the CHP? It seems to me that the people of this party are like the servants — and like the disciples who had perfectly good intentions — who want to pull out the evil in society.

To do this they must reduce complex issues into easy-to-digest, simplistic slogans in order to reach the greatest number of people. When we try to reduce involved matters to short phrases, the weak, the meek, those caught in circumstances beyond their control, suffer, something the Father Farmer wants to avoid at all cost.

Jesus discourages this approach because not only do good and evil inhabit the same field but even the same human beings. The parable clearly indicates that the enemy may be a nuisance, but never a threat. Does the CHP really think that our own moral efforts are necessary to the plan of salvation? Perhaps another point in the parable is that the Father Farmer, for the time being, wills to deal with evil by forgiveness and letting it be.

Patience required

Another parable also says something important about the Kingdom. Not only does the Kingdom roll along on its own power *(dunamis)*, it is also like yeast which a woman took to bake bread. She took a whole lot of flour, which, having baked a lot of bread myself, I know makes more than twice as much dough.

Just as the yeast, once in the dough, is totally undiscoverable in it, so is the Kingdom undiscoverable in the world. As long as the world has existed, the Kingdom has been in the world. So intimate is the yeast to the entire lump of dough, that there is no way of getting at it. Not for the enemy, not for you or me.

Do we need a new Christian political party to protect the Kingdom of God, which is actually God himself and which cannot be detected? What we do need is patience. Just like yeast needs time to penetrate, we too need patience (2 Peter 3:11-15). We need discernment, to recognize when the yeast (not we) has done the job. We must never forget that the job is done.

The Kingdom has always been here

Continued on page 6 ...

The best to him who gave himself

I want to thank you for the way you put together your 1988 Christmas issue. The result is proof that everyone of you gave his best to him who gave himself.

The drawing on the front page grips the believer in me. Never have I seen a picture of the Christ-child with features so sincerely Jewish.

Your articles and stories do not display sweet sentiments. Your writings are controlled yet inspire us to adoration.

The composition of advertisements, seasonal greetings and pictures is tastefully done.

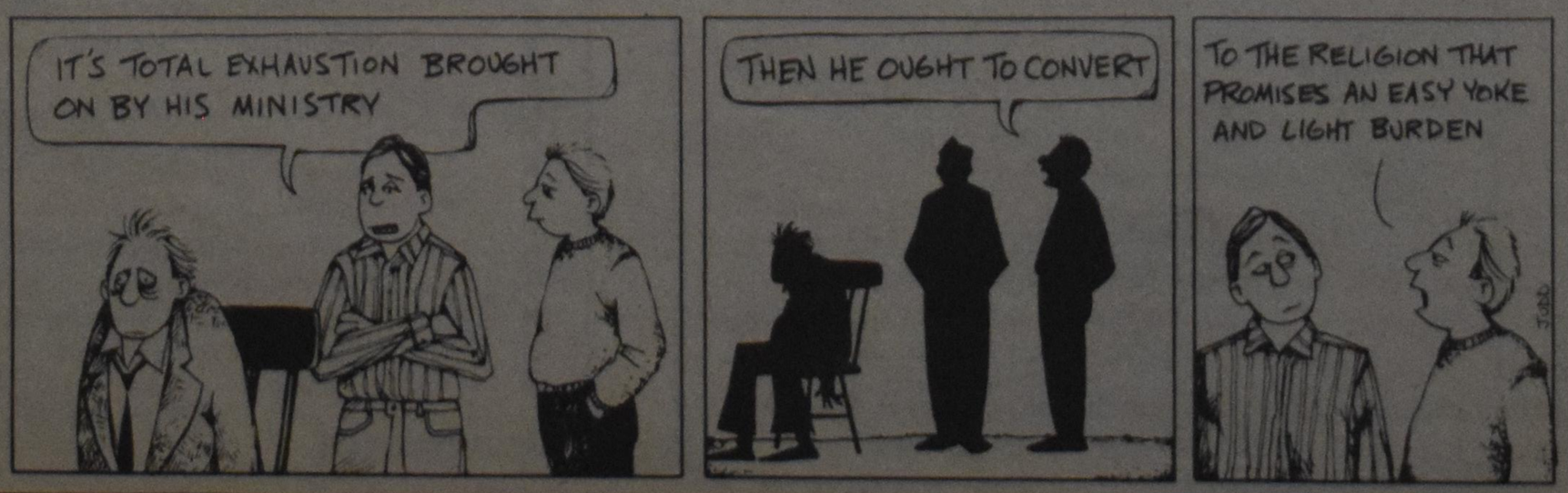
My one regret: that it could not have been done on a better quality paper.

We visited your office last June, so we know you all. And we wish you: A blessed Christmas and a happy 1989. Meet you at the Manger!

Grace Meetsma
Calgary, Alta.

For Church News see Page 17

BEYOND BELIEF


IT'S TOTAL EXHAUSTION BROUGHT ON BY HIS MINISTRY
THEN HE OUGHT TO CONVERT
TO THE RELIGION THAT PROMISES AN EASY YOKE AND LIGHT BURDEN
© 1988 Roger Judd

Letters

... continued from page 5.

and we must be living signposts of that Kingdom. That is why we need Christian churches and Christian schools to lead persons into maturity, characterized by patience, discernment and wisdom. We also need local Christian political think tanks, groups of Christians coming together periodically to learn what the Bible says about our political task.

Loving influence

CPJ is trying to do this all over Canada — not too successfully — in order to make true the demands of the Covenant, so beautifully and fittingly described in Micah 6:8

He has showed me, o man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.

The footnote in my NIV study Bible says: *man*. The use of the singular makes the accusation personal, though Micah is telling all Israel to "act justly ... to love mercy." This is the kind of obedience God expects from his covenant people. As covenant people we are personally and corporately responsible to God how we bring the Christian message, also in politics.

Our political task is not to try to eradicate evil, for it will result in doing more harm than good. Luke 17:2 says something about leading the immature in faith astray and about a millstone around the neck of those who do. We must be very careful what we do in the name of Christ.

Our political task is to lovingly try to influence those in power to follow the ways of the Lord. And that takes patience, discernment and a deep-felt confessional realization that the job has been done already when Christ was crowned King of the Kingdom on Calvary.

Bert Hielema
Tweed, Ont.

Did not elect, through neglect, but does reflect

Being one of thousands missed by the enumeration, I did not feel deprived, especially after observing the hectic activities of all parties.

Personally I was not approached to become a member of the CHP either. If I had been, I would have said: "How many years have you supported the CPJ and CLAC? Where were you when, for decades, those organizations made their mark and claims for justice and liberty in the portals of provincial and federal government.

Because of the influence of those organizations, government support for non-public schools has been established in several provinces, the well-being of native peoples has been promoted, recognition was given to the Christian Labour Association of Canada, etc. High-level consultations were held with representatives of all parties.

There is no question in my mind that the Lord has blessed the work of CPJ.

I would like to see that the leadership of CHP and CPJ would find a way of working together, or at least be in touch with each other, even when they differ. Otherwise we will again be faced with two organizations in our circles that work at cross purposes.

My last reflection is on the spontaneity and sincere efforts by supporters of the CHP. Somehow the thought came to mind — would it be too much to hope for such enthusiasm on the ecclesiastical plateau, and take away all man-made division at the level of educational institutions, care for the elderly, mentally handicapped, etc.

If no unity can be found in our own "back yard" why the pretence that we have a message to bring in the political arena?

Hendrik Plantinga
Brampton, Ont.

ATTENTION

Please use our new postal code L2W 1A1

ATTENTION

Effective January 1, 1989, Calvinist Contact is making another painful (and costly) adjustment in its official mailing address.

We spent thousands of dollars on new stationery, postage, etc. after we moved to a new plaza in St. Catharines during September, 1987.

We faithfully carried out the wishes of Canada Post and used the then correct postal code (L2R 6P9).

Just recently, however, our plaza, in Canada Post's limitless wisdom, was designated a "superbox" area. The sweet little thing now sits on a cement pad on a windy corner not too far away from us.

With the new designation came Canada Post's order: please change your postal code immediately. No comforting words like: "We give you a period of grace," or "Send your bill for unforeseen charges to Ottawa"!

All we can do now is to ask you to assist us by correctly addressing your mail from now on. If our address is in your computer or mailing list, please make the change immediately. Our official address is now:

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St. Catharines, ON
L2W 1A1

Keep smiling! We believe that the postal code stands for:
Love to whack one after this one.

Present Light

And how did he
receive the gifts
the baby child Jesus
or was he still a babe?
how many hours
old was he, or months, or more
when the three well-heeled gents
arrived on the scene
and when at last
they presented him their rich impractica
those precious things they'd come so far
so long to give
how much could he
by then
perceive?
Was he alert to the movement of someone new
could his eyes focus in
did they light
to the gold
did his little hands flail about
or grab
and were the parcels wrapped, was he of age
to handle the ribbon, tear the paper
and did he then, do you think, babble
his own, pentecostal thanks
or ignore
the gift, the giver, and cry "more, more!"
and did his parents finally stand on his behalf
tired, accepting
taking all this, these
the others, the servants, drifters, shepherds,
those both high and low
who come to adore, all hours
day in day out
while in the mother's arms the child
now begins to wail
and wails with a will
as they all do, the newly-born, the two-year old,
wailing for all the world as if to ask
already
that the cup would pass.

When the Lord Christ, in human form,
when the Prince of Light
revealed himself
in this, or somelike manner, at last
to the Gentiles
just how
did they, on our behalf
receive?

Did we three from out east
shy back at all
from infant noise, or smell
the sight, the animals
the undreamt-of setting, off a sidestreet, or
after the gifts, their visit done, did they
adjust their royal dress, prepare the saddles
and to each other silently confirm the fact
this was, all told, what they had come to see
and might have guessed, having read
the ancient texts?
did they, in point
of fact
believe
and mount their camels
and so proceed, happy
into the new year, and home?
or did it dawn
only later, months along, when the steady
eastward leading led them only further into nights
of fitful, interrupted rest, the ground too hard
for sleep, bones suddenly old, ears
hearing that cry again and again
And if and when
did they perceive that they had met a one
to whom their very richest knowing owned
in whom
all gift finds home
to whom all gifts return, who is
thine only begotten
from before the world
his light year come to earth
like a star's
shining, present in the swaddling dark.

John Terpstra
Hamilton, Ont.

For the time being...

Adrian Peetoom

A year of columns

These musings mark the end of my first year as one of its columnists. I have loved doing it, and I hope that Bert Witvoet lets me do it for a little while longer.

Why?

I love writing, for it forces me to pay close attention to what I really think and feel. In fact, my far-away children, with whom I have a fairly intensive correspondence, tell me that I often "sound" different in writing than I do in person. I think I know what they mean. The written words that leave my home have undergone a dialogue with the audience for which they are intended. In my imagination I have heard the reactions to a first draft, and have sorted and sifted the words and phrases until what I sent away can stand the test of love and clarity. At least to the limits of my writing talents.

My children's observations remind me (somewhat sadly sometimes, I must admit) of a fellow church member whose public words within church and Christian school circles always seemed combative, blunt, direct, tough. He would be aware of the effect on his hearers sometimes, and excuse himself by saying, "I say what I think."

I knew then, as I know now, that he didn't realize the real truth. Thanks be to God he was a far better man than that, energetic and generous for the Kingdom causes he cared for and the people in them with him. I wonder whether he, too, showed the effects of a world war and post-war church schism in his character the way so many of us Dutch-Canadian Calvinists do. In any event, those who knew and loved him, knew better than to judge him by the way his spoken words came out.

A second reason for this column is the joy of seeing it in print. My wife teases me that I immediately read "my" item when a particular issue appears, as if I see it for the first time. In a way I do. When I sent it away it was just my secret, but now it's public (that's what "published" means).

I've read it

But the third reason is what keeps me going. It doesn't happen that often, and it doesn't have to, but I delight when someone comes up and lets me know they read and liked "it." It would appear that those columns that voiced the cares and memories of my own generation found the most satisfied audience. We middle-agers and oldies seem to sense that our children and grandchildren may come to sit in church pews a bit less often than we did, and perhaps their marriages won't last as long either.

We wonder whether our "successors" will maintain the Christian organizations "we" left them, simply because they seem part of our traditions, instead of using them as launching pads for ever greater challenges to Canadian culture. And we're getting too old for all the meetings and activities ourselves. And we're a bit more uncertain about who we are as Canadians, and how much of us was left behind Dutch polder dikes forever.

That's what I hear when people let me know they've read what I wrote. They smile when they approve and frown when they criticize. Smiles and frowns are welcome, both, for I know I have touched them.

So I end this last column for 1988 with these three observations of gratitude:

* To all those who spoke and smiled and frowned.
* To Bert Witvoet, who thought of a column title that aptly covered the contents.
* To God, who has forgiven me for taking far too long to learn that all writing must be a way of loving people.

May our heavenly Father bless you all in 1989.

Adrian Peetoom is senior editor at Scholastic Tab Publications, Richmond Hill, Ont.

Redeemer College exhibits Dutch artist's work

Photo: Vanguard 1978-1981

Henk Krijger at work on A disappointment, *1970, wood, plexiglass, bottles, zinc sackcloth, shingle, cork and paint.*

ANCASTER, Ont. (RC) — An art exhibition to be held at the Redeemer College Art Gallery, January 21 — March 10, 1989, will pay tribute to a man who wrestled with the relationship between faith and art.

The exhibit is "Hommage a Senggih: a retrospective of Henk Krijger in North America." Krijger's modern, expressionistic form provides a strong Christian model in the visual arts and demonstrates specific directives helpful to developing young artists.

"He taught me a new way of looking at reality and to give real meaning to Christ's redemptive power in my art and in my life," says graphic designer and former friend of Krijger, Willem Hart of Toronto.

Krijger is known as a sculptor, painter, designer, typographer, book designer, writer, and storyteller. While in the Netherlands, he designed the internationally known typeface, "Raffia Letters." In 1969 he moved to North America and became Master-artist at the Institute for Christian Art near Chicago and later at the Patmos Workshop and Gallery in Toronto. Krijger died in 1979.

Krijger's art work has been on exhibit in major centres around the world including London, Zurich, Melborne, and Toronto's O'Keefe Centre.

Happy New Year

Cinema summaries

Marian Van Til

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels

Rated PG
Stars Steve Martin, Michael Caine, Glenn Headly, Anton Rodgers
Directed by Frank Oz

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels is a kind of cinematic tall tale, told with lots of bluster and slapstick. The scoundrels of the title are con men who each have ingenius routines for making very rich, not-too-bright, fame-seeking ladies want to part with their wealth. (Michael Caine's character, a softie as well as a smoothie, justifies his "career" by insisting that he doesn't work on honourable women nor on those that can't afford to miss some money.)

Cain's persona is a suave European who has, via his "profession," set himself up nicely (huge estate, manicured gardens, servants) in a French coastal town. However, the newspapers are reporting tales of a shrewd American con artist (known as "The Jackel") who is bilking people out of fortunes all over Europe.

When Martin's character, the stereotypical brash American, tries to horn in on the European's territory, Caine's character is more annoyed than worried; he believes the American is no match for him. The European agrees to take the American on as a "student" only so that he can eventually get the man out of the area, graciously. They make a wager that whoever can successfully con $50,000 from a person agreed-upon can stay, but the loser must leave. Their target is a rich-looking American "soap queen" who checks into the local hotel while they happen to be watching.

From then on, they and the woman give each other a run for the money; there are cons within cons, silly antics and crazy humour. The men get their just desserts (of course) in the end — the most surprising movie ending since the dramatic turn-around climax of *No Way Out*.

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels borrows quite unashamedly from several David Niven personas (Caine is made to look like Niven, with the slicked-back hair and pencil moustache). It's meant to evoke nostalgia for an era and film genre in which a docile and basically naive society (like the women in the film) needed only such outrageous, twists-around-every-corner pictures to be truly entertained.

If taken properly as farce, this movie is fairly harmless. It is not mean-spirited and it pokes fun at the materialistic worldliness of both the protagonists and their victims, without intending to be much more than uproarious fluff. (The Oxford dictionary defines *farce* as a dramatic form "meant merely to cause laughter, often by presenting ludicrously improbable events.")

As might be expected, farce can't stand much scrutiny. That may pose a dilemma for viewers (particularly Calvinists) who want to look beyond these humourously twisted goings-on for serious values or spiritual nuances. Though many of us would do well to place more importance on laughter, this kind of low-substance, high calorie "dessert" probably won't — and perhaps shouldn't — sit well with many thoughtful Christians. After all, scams these days are a serious concern. We no longer live in those more innocent times when con men (and women) were rare, and were either Robin Hoods at heart or were truly dastardly but easily exposed and brought to justice.

So despite the laughs, the movie's presentation of these likeable liars leaves one feeling uneasy. Even dessert should have a few usable calories.

Church

Marian Van Til, page editor

New organization to assist persecuted Christians around world

COSTA MESA, California (EP) — ASSIST, a new ministry which will "assist" believers throughout the world who suffer under religious persecution, has recently been launched by a British journalist and a Russian Christian who fled the U.S.S.R. because of persecution for her faith in Christ.

"ASSIST, which stands for Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times, has been created to form a 'life-link' between churches in the West and those in restricted countries — nations that are closed to traditional missionary work, or where religious freedom is curtailed," explained co-founder Dan Wooding, a journalist and book author who has written extensively on the persecuted church around the world.

The new organization is being co-founded by Wooding and Lida Vashchenko. Vashchenko is one of the "Siberian Seven," a group of people who sought refuge in the basement of the U.S. embassy in Moscow in 1981 to escape religious persecution there. The seven lived in the embassy for two years, staging a "sit in for freedom" until they were granted visas to emigrate. Wooding, author of some 22 books, once wrote extensively about Vashchenko and the Siberian Seven. He also led marches and spoke publicly in an attempt to heighten awareness around the world of the plight of the group.

The four goals of the new organization are to recruit an army of ASSIST prayer warriors to pray for those in the suffering church; establish a sister church program in which Western churches will "adopt" a persecuted church; help assimilate Christian refugees; and raise financial support for ministries working with churches in restricted countries.

Wooding said that churches in Eastern Europe will be the first to be adopted in the sister church program, but that he is also working with churches in China, Ethiopia, Cuba, and Nicaragua.

"The window of opportunity for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to shine in restricted nations is opening," Wooding said. "But we must act now."

Cautious steps to lower tension in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG (REC) — The low black voter turnout in October's municipal elections here seemed to confirm the calls by the anti-apartheid forces to boycott the election. However, the leading National Party won enough of the elections to embolden it to make some changes. In November four signifcant moves by the government seemed to be aimed at lowering tension.

*Two long-time political prisoners were released outright, both leaders of outlawed opposition groups, the Pan African Congress and the African National Congress.

*The government accepted the timetable for withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, leaving the way open for it to keep its promise to withdraw from Namibia.

*The "Sharpeville six" had their death sentences commuted to life imprisonment. The six were in a mob that committed murder, but no evidence of their direct participation was given at the trial.

*Nelson Mandela will not be returned to prison following his treatment for tuberculosis at a clinic, but will continue in a modified form of detention where he will be more comfortable and able to receive family members on a regular basis.

A Nationalist Party source indicates that these moves are a response to international and domestic pressure, while at the same time cautious enough to avoid aggravating the far-right.

Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists short on mission funds

CHICAGO (REC) — Three major U.S. churches have had to cut back on their mission budgets. The United Methodists board of Global Ministries have been spending above their income for the last five years and anticipate a deficit of about $1 million a year. The Women's Division withheld its $5 million contribution until the board put its budgeting back on track.

The U.S. Southern Baptists (SBC) have also been faced with a dramatic drop in support from their congregations. With an annual budget of $167 million, the SBC foreign mission board is probably the largest such board in the world. However, it is facing its second consecutive $5 million shortfall in giving at its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The financial problems of the SBC may reflect other tensions within the convention, as conservatives are forcing their views on the moderates within the convention.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has also had to trim its $32 million budget by $2 million. Its missionary staff was reduced by 25 persons and its financing of relief projects was also reduced.

On the other side of the world, the Vatican announced that it had a record deficit of $63.8 million. A special committee warned that the Vatican reserve funds are now exhausted. In 1988 the Vatican used the worldwide Peter's Pence offering, traditionally used for missions and charity, to balance its own deficits. However, the Vatican, which employs some 2,325 people, is far from impoverished. The interest income of $38 million reveals vast assets in investments and properties still untouched by the deficit.

Dutch churches delay merger decisions

LEUSDEN, Neth. (REC) — The Netherlands Reformed Church (NHK) and the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (GKN) could not agree on details of government and church order at a combined synod at the end of October. The synod dealt with proposals from deputies for *Together on the Way (Samen op Weg)*, a movement to join the two churches.

A church order draft presented by the deputies was passed by a majority of those present, but not by a majority of both churches. Since a majority of the NHK rejected the draft, it has been referred back to the moderamina of the "Combi-synod."

Another document known as "Sketch 1988" describing the future structure of the church was debated at length. The sketch placed the emphasis of collective practice on the classical level of church government, according to G. Dingemans, chairperson of the drafting committee. He noted that it was an important function of a classis that it exercises discipline over its member churches. However, delegates perceived this as a practice of the GKN more than of the NHK. NHK delegates objected that the sketch did not give enough weight to the provincial level of church government.

A proposal to establish a larger and a smaller synod in the combined church also received criticism. It was argued that the larger synod would become a rubber stamp for the smaller group. In the end the sketch was not approved but sent back to the committee for revision.

Youth for Christ USA opens its first adolescent recovery center

ELD GROVE VILLAGE, Ill (EP) — To combat the growing tide of illegal drug use among America's teenagers, Youth for Christ/USA has launched a new type of ministry: YFC Recovery Centers.

YFC Recovery Centers will be located in existing hospitals, with the first unit opening in the Alexian Brothers Medical Center in Elk Grove Village, Illinois. The centers will be Christ-centered treatment units designed to provide quality programs for adolescents who are addicted to drugs or alcohol, experiencing emotional problems, eating disorders, or who are suicidal.

YFC President, Dr. Richard R. Wynn, says the YFC/USA Recovery Centers will exemplify the ministry's sole reason for existence: "To communicate the life-changing message of Jesus Christ to every young person."

YFC's announcements of the new program note that America has an estimated 3.3 million teenage alcoholics, as well as 5,000 new cocaine users and 2,000 new crack users each day. Additionally, 57 children and adolescents try to take their own lives each hour.

New general secretary for Reformed ecumenical group

BELFAST (REC) — Milan Opocensky, professor of Christian social ethics at the Comenius Faculty in Prague, was appointed the new general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) last month. In October 1989 he will succeed outgoing secretary Edmund Perret, who has served WARC for 20 years.

From 1967 to 1973, Opocensky was Europe secretary for the World Student Christian Federation. Since 1975 he has been a member of the board of directors of the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches.

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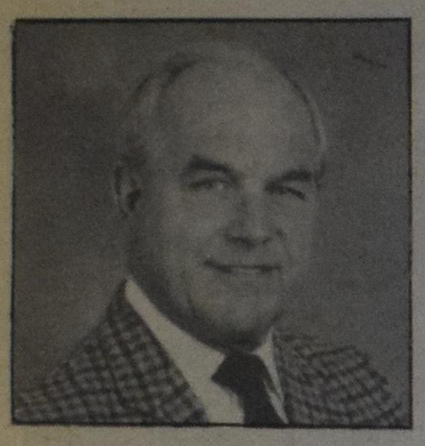

Canadian Church Scene

Be kind to "enemies," children, animals

Jacob Kuntz

Intolerance

It is remarkable that almost every denomination in our times struggles with the problem of polarization and, as a result, extremism. Not only Protestant, and (to stay closer to home, Reformed) churches face that issue. Also the Roman Catholic Church has its extremists: people who have no tolerance for those whose opinions differ from theirs. The *Catholic Register* of November 19 makes mention of those "who proudly describe themselves as either hard-line, right-wing or left-wing Catholics" and then continues:

This is a tragedy and a scandal. Both extreme elements should be so ashamed that they be forced to reconsider how they have become so polarized, so cynical, so hard-line, so judgmental — and so far from the gentleness, the compassion, the kindness and understanding of the Lord they claim to love and follow. The Lord who wills that all men and women be his followers — not just some self-appointed, self-important, would-be elite. If one sees through their pseudo-piety, these extremists are, in reality, spiritual chisellers who would deny the love and mercy of God to those not of their narrow liking or choosing.

So long as human beings form the Body of Christ, there will be differences and disagreements. So long as there are strong Christian personalities, in the tradition of Peter and Paul, there will be controversy. And the modern successors to those apostles should be as fearless in correcting the extremists; not manipulated by the extremist vehemence into silence or submission, leaving their priests on the firing line.

There is no need, however — and no justification — for today's hard-line extremists who would rather chase one another out of the church than talk, walk and pray with one another to build a stronger, more authentic church to challenge the secular world.

Extremists of both stripes can ruthlessly and relentlessly pursue their own personal agendas for the church — and callously discard all those who disagree.

Or they can stop, take stock, and ask what the Lord would bid us do in building his Kingdom — a Kingdom destined for all peoples.

Let them listen, those who have ears to hear.

The call for day care

During the recent election campaign the leaders of the three largest political parties tried to outbid one another in promising more government money for day care. Even though we admit that a number of people in our society need assistance in the care for their children as they try to make a living for their family (single mothers, widows, etc.), yet it now seems that day care has become an almost universal right. Is parenting out? John Redekop has some tough things to say about this issue in the Mennonite Brethren of Oct. 28:

How blinded have we become. Schools deal with countless emotionally distraught youngsters. Surveys show that young people crave love more than anything else. Juvenile delinquency rates keep on rising. Alcohol and drug abuse abound. Metropolitan streets contain thousands of neglected or alienated "street kids." Yet we persist in finding new ways to replace mothers with others.

Of course there is a proper place for day care. Single parents, or families where mom and dad both need to work in order to provide the necessities, deserve assistance. Churches, other service-minded agencies and governments have a role to play. Society should provide subsidized help where it's needed.

Given our society's high incidence of broken homes, unmarried mothers and the other factors which may compel mother to seek outside jobs, the legitimate needs have become substantial. The required service by substitutes should be provided. But let's not kid ourselves into thinking that, in general, the substitute is as good as the real thing and should become the norm.

"Quality day care" and especially "quality day care for all" ring hollow. They are false slogans, as generally used.

They falsely imply that money can provide substitute parenting.

They falsely suggest that facilities and professionals can substitute for emotional security.

They falsely infer that full-time "work" and part-time parenting is the best mix.

They wrongly presume that parents who give up economic benefits for family gain should, through higher taxes, subsidize the two-income parents who give up family benefits for economic gain.

"Quality day care," although much below good home care in quality, can serve a very useful purpose. But society needs to be reminded that it's strictly second best.

Animals I

It is "in" to speak up for animals these days. Little babies in the womb may be killed, but baby seals must be protected. A church in New York took "what must be for many the ultimate step in showing love and concern for animals." Indeed, it was quite "ultimate." And the *Canadian Churchman* (Nov. 1988) has words of approval for this newest stunt.

Not content with blessing only the pets of boys and girls, parishioners at the cathedral have gone further in recent years. On the Sunday nearest to the day commemorating St. Francis of Assisi, they invite a menagerie of animals to church and shower them with music, song and dance.

In an effort to "put animals into religion" last month, they gathered about the altar 25 of them, including an elephant, camel, lama, horse, pony, donkey, goats, chickens, an eagle, a parrot, a rabbit and a turtle.

The skeptical will regard the service as a publicity stunt. The traditionally-minded will regard it as an inappropriate form of worship.

The cathedral's "Blessing of Animals" service however, should be seen as a legitimate attempt to bring to public attention the suffering many animals endure for the sake of food production, experimentation, fur garments, entertainment and sport.

Animals II

Animals were also the subject of "National Comment" by Peter Trueman (*Catholic Register*, Nov. 12). Trueman wrote about "curious choices in TV coverage." One of those choices was the interest in Ben Johnson's fall from grace (four hours of prime time on CBC). Another choice was the story about the California whales trapped by Alaska ice. Said Trueman: "The trouble with television is that it has no judgment. More often than not it doesn't know when to stop." Especially after a long election campaign we can only agree! Back to the whales:

In the middle of national election campaigns in two countries, we had a spate of network news stories about three, then two California grey whales trapped by pack ice off the coast of Alaska.

Please don't misunderstand. I am fascinated by whales and support their preservation. As a rule I find them more interesting than politicians. It's nice that people can still get emotional about them. It was heartening to see all that trouble and expense on behalf of two wild creatures. But putting a pair of whales that high on the daily TV agenda of the entire North American continent for that long inflated the importance of what was really nothing more than a particularly sad aspect of the natural cycle.

The TV coverage at least made the point that grey whales are an endangered species, and if I believed that the stories I saw would generate a campaign to save them, I wouldn't object. But they won't. The coverage catered to the viewer's emotions; not their intellects and their better instincts. It was pure Walt Disney — not David Suzuki.

Producers know they'll attract more audience by telling a story about two whales' struggle with the elements than they will by restating the depressing truth about what humanity is doing to the entire whale population through greed, stupidity and inattention.

The Alaska story was the "good news" that everyone seems to clamour for. It made people feel good about themselves. Grey whales have been getting trapped by pack ice in the Arctic Ocean for as long as they've been summering there. This time, people were trying to help.

Jacob Kuntz is pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Kitchener, Ont.

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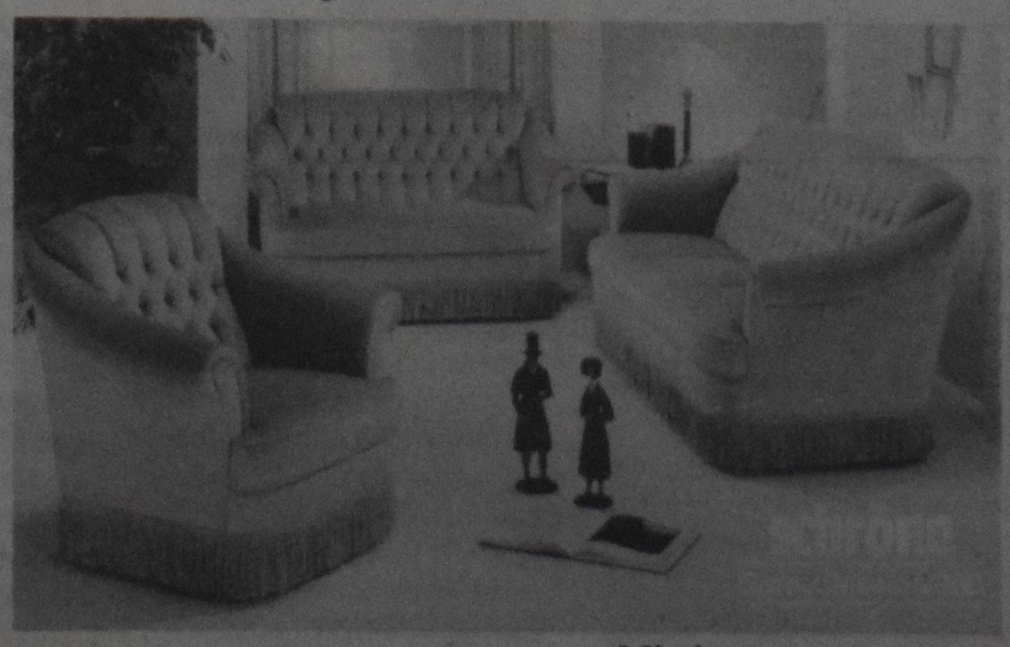

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Features

Buying groceries at a Nigerian market

Flies and germs are extra

Photo: Edwin de Jong

Theresa Bakker (at right) worships with Fulani people in an outdoor service in Gongola State, Nigeria. Many of the Fulani Theresa meets at the market are Muslim. Theresa's husband, Rev. Fred Bakker, is in the background on the far left.

Theresa Bakker

When I buy groceries today in Nigeria I think of the trips I used to take to the supermarket in Canada. It surely is different here.

Now I first put on my "market shoes" because the market is a grubby place. I do not want to walk around the house with my market shoes. Next I put on my hat, to protect me from the hot afternoon sun. I also take two large plastic baskets; paper bags are not usually available. Then, I take my special naira (Nigerian currency) wallet. The nairas are larger than either Canadian or U.S. bills, and seven naira equal about one U.S. or Canadian dollar. Off I go! There are many potholes and crevices on the road to market and it takes me 15 minutes to get there.

When I arrive, it is very busy, as usual. One goes to the market for anything and everything. You can get your shoes fixed; buy made-to-measure clothes; or have your fingernails or toenails clipped. Adding to the busy atmosphere are the sounds of live goats and chickens.

My first problem is always finding a place to park. The booths are all so close to the road. My truck will block two entire entrances. So I drive on until I see a bare spot. I wonder how safe it is to park here — away from the crowd.

The stores at the market are approximately 10 by eight by seven feet. Each shop displays its wares inside and outside. I stop at the first booth, and am greeted with a big smile. Merchants love "baturis" (white faces) for they have much more money than a Nigerian.

I ask the price of each item before I buy because no articles are price marked. I buy two tins of Blue-Band margarine, three naira each. Ten small rolls of peppermints cost two naira, and 24 Lipton tea bags are three naira. I examine a bar of hard green soap, covered with a layer of dust and dirt, and decide to look for it elsewhere. I pay the shopkeeper. The change he gives me is grimy.

I walk about 10 paces and stop at another stall. Again, the people are very friendly. They ask me to buy "lemonade." White faces always buy that stuff for three naira. Bleach costs two naira. (I should have checked the top because it was cracked and spilled over my groceries). I buy a new scribbler for language study for one naira and a Bic pen for 50 kobo. A bag of candy is one naira, and Nescafe coffee is 6½.

Sun-warmed eggs

I see a wheelbarrow with bread and check the freshness. Instantly, five or six pairs of hands wave loaves of bread in front of my face. One yells louder than the others: "Fresh, look, this good!" "Buy mine." "Good bread." "Madam, buy mine." The voices squeal in my ears. I buy three loaves for three naira. I see someone selling homemade sweepers for 20 kobo. Good buy! I paid 50 kobo in Wukari. The booths carry small quantities of many things such as biscuits, pencils, matches, candles, detergent, and milk powder. Eggs stand in the sun for hours until there is a buyer. Cases of pop and beer are everywhere.

Mia — palm oil — is sold out of a large basin to people who bring pop bottles and tins to fill. Whatever drips off the sides of the containers falls back into the basin and waits for the next customer. I shiver! I come to the vegetable counter. You have to watch your step because the ground is wet with something slimy — probably chewed-up oranges and banana peels.

The rows of booths are still relatively clean. But inside the market things are different. Women sit nursing their children while they sell flour, rice, beans, and all sorts of things to make the famous "tuo-da-miya," pounded yams with meat sauce. All the flour and ground corn are displayed in large open pans. The women use a small pan and their hands to scoop the wheat meal into pyramids. It looks more attractive that way for customers. They see me, and smile. Right away they point to the peanuts. I politely tell them, "No thank you. Not today."

Buy them green

I buy some rough green leaves which taste a bit like spinach. The leaves are full of holes, where bugs have feasted on these leaves first. But never mind — whatever is left is still green. The onions are displayed in neat piles, four on the bottom and one on top. They're 20 kobo a pile. I find the best bunch, give the merchant a plastic bag, and ask for one naira's worth. He gives me an extra onion for "a dash" as they say. He does that with the hope I will return to his booth next time I come.

I need tomatoes, too. One tray with 30 to 40 rotten tomatoes stands on display along with the small piles of five to 50 kobo a pile. I tell him I do not want soft tomatoes. He gives me six hard green ones — 50 kobo. Bananas are next on my list. They're small, and cost 50 kobo a bunch. I check the backs, they are black and rotten. Sorry, I don't want them. I see a young girl selling "better" bananas and buy some for one-and-a-half naira.

My plastic bags are getting heavy — so I go to the truck to unload. I see a young boy and I ask him to watch my groceries and give him 50 kobo (an hour's wage), which makes him very happy.

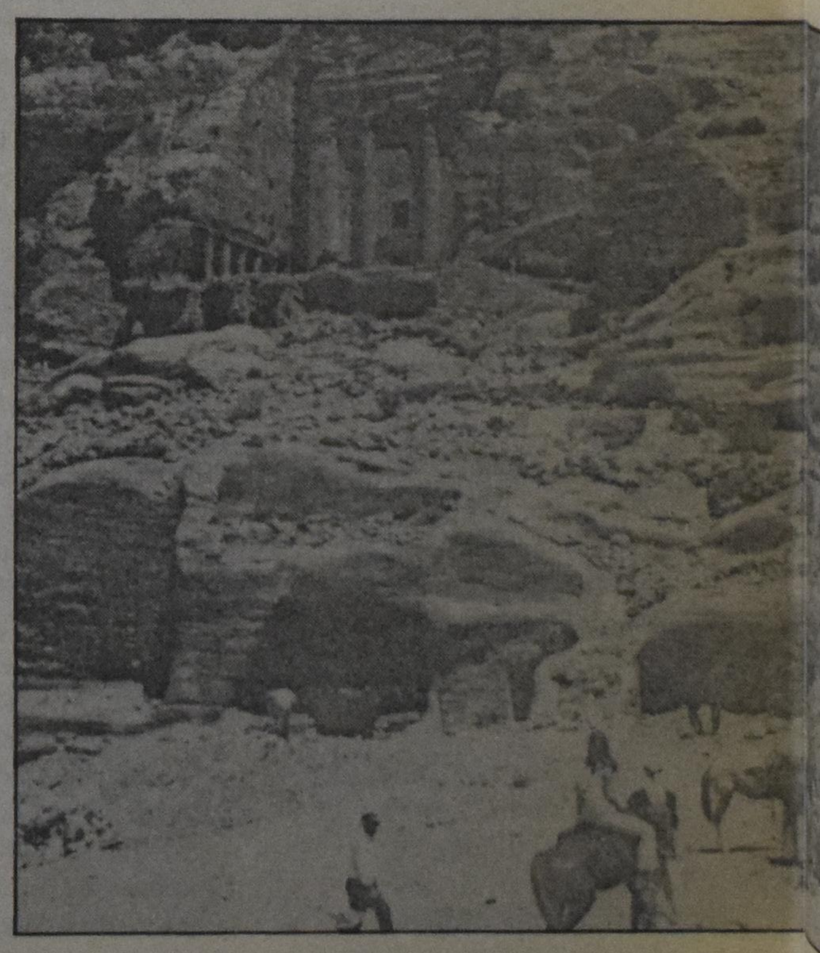
Back in the interior market, I pass the fish area. Various types of fish lie out in the open on the ground and stink to high heaven. The flies are feasting, so I try to move through that area as quickly as I can, holding my breath. At the meat counter, half a cow lies on display. Blood, bones, heart, liver, ribs, stomach — it's all there for purchasing. Again, the flies are like a black cloud around the butcher and his meat. "See? See? Good meat! Come, buy!" The butcher calls when he sees me. I pass and smile: "No, thank you, not today."

Silk hair, muslim prayer

Children often come up to me at the market. They are delightful. They're so straightforward, I just love them. They come to me and slightly touch my hand or arm to see if I'm real. One girl insists on shaking my hand to test my strength. As I walk on, a very young child at his mother's breast sees me and begins to scream. I try to hide my face as both his mother and I laugh — white faces are scary if you've never seen one before. Another child, seven or eight years old, asks for one of the hairs on my head. She wants to know what a straight blonde hair feels like. When I give her one, she runs her fingers across it again and again, as though it is a thread of silk.

Amid the noise and confusion I hear the Muslim call to prayer. It's 4 p.m. Shops close. Men take their small kettles of water and wash their faces, their arms, and their feet. They go with prayer mats under their arms or on their heads to the mosque. Five times a day this ritual repeats for all strict Muslims. But, today is Friday, the special time of the week to "hasten and remember God and stop your trading." As I see them walk to the mosque, my prayers rise to heaven: "It's Jesus! Jesus alone! Lord, open their eyes and save their souls through the blood."

Later I arrive home with groceries for another week. I thank God that we have more than we need as his hand provides. And I ask him again to help us as we try to supply the Fulani people with the spiritual food they so desperately need.



Petra's monuments figure

Petra — rock-bound "Venice" of antiquity

Photo: Unesco/IGN

The Khazneh, Petra's most celebrated monument, is thought to be the mausoleum of the Nabataean King Aretas IV, who reigned at the dawn of the Christian era.

Slimane Zeghidour

(UNESCO SPECIAL) — "Travellers in the future will be able to visit Petra under the protection of an armed force. The inhabitants will get used to the inquiries of foreigners and then the antiquities of Wadi Mussa will be recognized as worthy of inclusion amongst the most interesting vestiges of ancient art."

It was on the road to Mecca that the great traveller Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, a Swiss convert to Islam, rediscovered Petra in 1812, after it had been hidden for centuries from sight and memory in a labyrinth of cliffs. The old Arabic name of the town, Reqem, means "a cloth of many colours." Since Burckhardt's discovery, numerous archeological missions have little by little brought to light this ancient Nabataean capital. English, French, German, American and Spanish, they have all helped in developing Petra National Park, listed under the 1935 Law of Antiquities by the Government of Jordan.

Keenly studied and regularly visited, Petra has been on Unesco's World Heritage List since December 6, 1985. This list, which was started in 1978 with only 12 sites, today comprises 288 natural and cultural sites in 65 different countries.

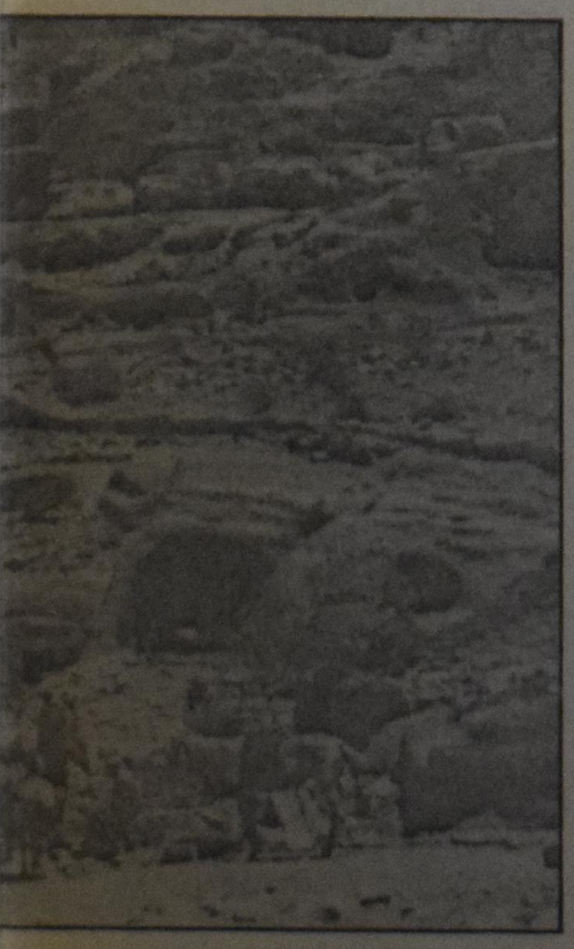


Photo: Unesco/Dan Dubert

among the most extraordinary vestiges of ancient art.

City of the Nabataeans

The uniqueness of this combination of ancient Mediterranean and Oriental cultures is brought out by the majesty and exceptional nature of the site. Little is known about Petra before 100 B.C. The description given by the Greek geographer Strabo (58 B.C. — 25 A.D.) is still apposite: "The Metropolis of the Nabataeans is called Petra and it stretches across a flat landscape; but this plain is defended by steep crags, while, inside, abundant springs supply water, for the gardens in particular. Beyond this amphitheatre of cliffs there is little but desert ...." (Geography, 16; 4.21).

Petra is not easily accessible. One must follow the winding river bed of the Valley of Moses (Wadi Mussa), covered by a profusion of bay-roses and fig trees, as far as the Sikh, a narrow passage hollowed out of the rock over thousands of years by rushing torrents, which have left blue and yellow traces in the cliffs rising on either side to more than 100 metres (300 ft.). At the end of this dark passage stands the Khazneh (the Treasury), Petra's most celebrated monument, whose salmon-pink facade is carved out of the mountain itself. Forty-five metres (140 ft.) high and 24 metres (75 ft.) wide, it is thought to be the Mausoleum of the Nabataean King Aretas IV, who reigned at the beginning of the Christian era.

The Khazneh is the foremost of the 500 temple tombs which make Petra a gigantic necropolis. In the middle of the site all that remains of the old city is the *cardo maximus,* or wide central avenue, leading to the vestiges of the Great Temple, the Qasr-al-Bint. The inside walls are carved and sculpted to make tombs and temples in which Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman arts combine to produce an original synthesis which is typically Nabataean.

This syncretism on the artistic plane in fact reflects the religious ecumenism of Petra, where the most ancient semitic rites, represented by baetyls or sacred stones embodying the "holy presence," coexist with Egyptian and Greco-Roman gods and goddesses.

These interactions in art and religion naturally went hand in hand with trade. The Nabataeans, the "Venetians" of antiquity, who took over Petra from the Edomites early in the 4th century B.C., made the city their capital, ideally situated, as it was, at the cross-roads of the major caravan routes linking Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean: gold, silver, precious stones, wood, rare animals, spices, incense and other goods passed through here.

From Christianity to Islam

In the first century of the Christian era the Nabataeans lost their trade monopoly to the Romans. The city was then integrated into the Empire as part of the Province of Arabia (106 A.D.). In 130 A.D. the Emperor Hadrian paid it a formal visit. The Christian faith took root there and the heresiarch Nestorius was to be relegated there after the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. Some of Petra's gods, Al Uzza for example, were worshipped also in Mecca, while the alphabet used by the Nabataeans — Aramaic-speaking Arabs — is considered by many historians to be one of the sources of present-day Arabic script.

On the advent of Islam, the population little by little converted to the new religion. Behind the site the Crusaders built a castle, *Livaux Moise,* which can still be seen today. The Egyptian Sultan Baybars stopped at Petra in 1276 during his campaign against the fortresses of the Crusaders. Then the dust of centuries covered its glory until that day in 1812 when Burckhardt stumbled upon it.

Excavation and restoration

The exploration of Petra is still going on and it gives rise to fruitful international co-operation. The Jordanian Government takes a constant interest in the protection of the site and the Petra National Park.

Photo: Unesco/Slimane Zeghidour

Petra has more than 500 tombs hewn out of the rock.

From 1969 to 1974, Unesco and the French Government, together with the Jordanian authorities and a Spanish mission, carried out a large-scale photogrammetric survey. In 1985 the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, with the help of Unesco, undertook an international campaign of excavation and restoration of the monuments, as also preventive measures against erosion by the elements.

The University of Utah (United States of America), the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, the Institut Francais d'Archeologie and the British Institute of Archaeology, as well as Spanish experts, are working together to throw more light on the civilization of the Nabataeans, who were intelligent people, pragmatic traders, and enjoyed a prosperity which was the envy of all the empires.

According to the many epitaphs on their tombs, they seem to have wanted to leave an indelible mark of their passage on earth. They prefigured the Islamic precept, "Think of life as eternal and death as imminent."

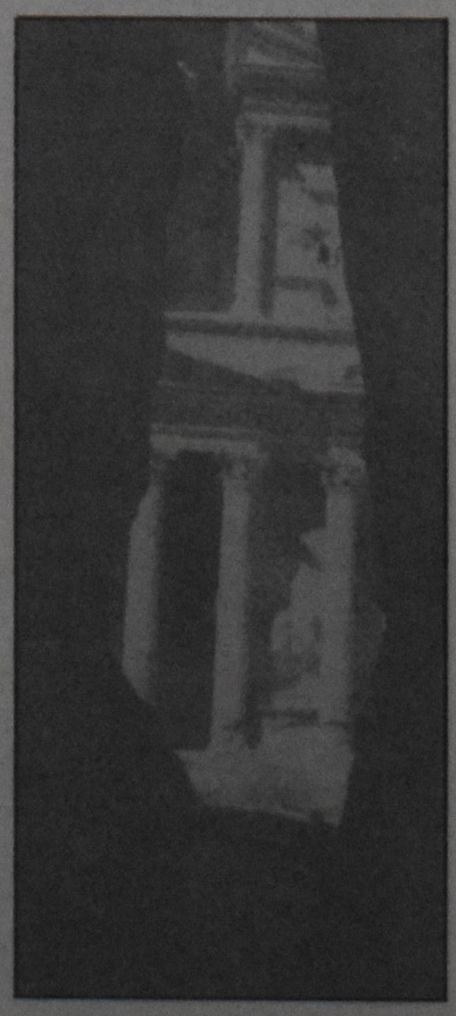


Photo: Unesco/IGN

The dark passage leading to the site opens on to one of the monumental royal tombs.

Feature

Can the CRC be both Reformed and Canadian?

Photo: C.C. files

Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church of Calgary, Alta.

Jake Binnema

Does the Canadian Christian Reformed Church have anything distinctive to add to the smorgasbord of Christian denominations in Canada? What is it about the Christian Reformed Church that permits it to confess its faith in *one* Church, while it remains a separate denomination? Put differently, what does it mean to be both Reformed and Canadian? And practically speaking, what sort of ecumenical activity should Canadian CRCs pursue?

These are the sorts of questions that members of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC), a standing committee of the CRC of North America, ponder. In 1987, the CRC adopted an ecumenical charter to guide its thinking and practice in these areas. That charter states that "the unity of the Church must become visibly manifest. The perfect form of such unity has not yet been realized. Until then we therefore earnestly seek the leading of the Holy Spirit into a unity which is one of mutual renewal and acceptance."

Obviously, this challenge is the challenge of the whole church, not just a matter of private discussion by a committee. So the IRC is eager to know how, in practice, local churches are demonstrating their distinctiveness and ecumenicity.

With that in mind, the IRC sent out a questionnaire to every CRC in Canada in the spring of 1988 in order to find out what was happening at a local level in its churches and to report on some of that information to the churches. The information was also intended to help the IRC carry out its mandate in a more concrete way and to determine which activities deserve priority consideration.

The 50 per cent return rate of the questionnaires was very encouraging. It gives a reliable basis to form at least some conclusions. Also, the responses came from a good cross-section of churches (east/west, urban/rural and large/medium/small). Most often, the pastor of the church was the respondent; sometimes it was the clerk and, on occasion, the whole council was involved in answering the questions.

The questions of the questionnaire inquired about: 1) the activities and contact that churches, pastors and members had with those of other Christian denominations, 2) the perceived degree and meaningfulness of such involvement, 3) the limits (actual or perceived) to increased ecumenical contact and 4) how crucial ecumenical relations were felt to be for the ministry of the respondent's local church.

What follows is not so much a report on that survey as my personal response and evaluation to what appears to be happening in Canadian CRCs.

Church contacts

About half the churches responding indicated that they were involved in some joint worship services, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Reformation Day, Day of Prayer, Christian Unity Week, Remembrance Day, etc. These services are often "extra" services, scheduled in addition to a local church's own services. One respondent felt that his church's involvement in ecumenical services was inhibited because his church did not cancel its own services.

About one quarter of our pastors have pulpit exchanges with pastors of other denominations. Though this does not appear to be a frequent practice, there are occasions when pastors from various denominations exhort from CRC pulpits.

Other joint efforts include co-operation in Vacation Bible Schools, crusades, showing film series, and newspaper and radio appearances. The "Friendship Bible Clubs" for the mentally impaired is frequently a successful ecumenical endeavour.

The ministers of the CRC tend to be quite involved in their local clergy associations. Ninety per cent of the responding ministers belong to a local association and they often give leadership in those organizations. Many ministers are also active in a variety of chaplaincies.

Where do the CRC's members meet and work with members of other denominations? Many of them are involved in joint Bible studies such as the "Coffee Break" series. Nursing home services are other places of contact. About 3/4 of the churches have such contact in each of these.

Another area of joint ministry, in which especially the larger and urban churches' members are quite involved, are service ministries such as food banks, refugee sponsorship, prison ministry, housing assistance and disaster relief. The summer of 1987 saw CRC members in Edmonton engaged in co-operative ecumenical relief effort after the tornado that struck portions of that city. Also included in this area of service are "Meals on Wheels" and "Telecare." There is also some ecumenical youth outreach done by CRC members, but only very few are involved in this.

Does ecumenicity threaten the Reformed perspective?

Organizational outreach

Christian school societies are also becoming increasingly ecumenical. Especially in the western provinces, where government funding has alleviated the financial burden for parents somewhat, Christian school societies have members from a whole range of denominations. The increased awareness and interest of evangelical denominations in Christian day school education is evident in the increasing ecumenicity of this endeavour. This has again provided about 3/4 of CR congregations with an opportunity to work co-operatively with members of other denominations.

This is an encouraging development. It forces us to ask, however, as many in the Christian School movement are already asking, whether the increasing ecumenicity of this movement has allowed the Reformed holistic Kingdom perspective to flourish and expand or whether other views and philosophies, such as a "world-flight" mentality, are threatening to erode the Reformed tradition in this vital endeavour.

Finally, there is the area of public witness. This area warrants our close attention because it is in this area, along with the related area of Christian education, that probably the most distinctive hallmark of the CRC's Reformed witness can be found. From how many other pulpits besides Christian Reformed does one hear exhortations to those claimed and bought by the blood of Christ to serve their Lord and King in all areas of life, including communal action and witness in the areas of labour, economics, politics, business, agriculture, education, etc.? If this has been the CRC's contribution, what has become of this public witness as it reaches out into Canadian society?

Let us examine the answers to the questions which asked whether the members of the respondent's congregation were involved in the following ecumenical organizations:

Christian Farmers' Federations, Christian Heritage Party, Christian Labour Association, and the Citizens for Public Justice. The CFFs were on the bottom with 36 per cent of the congregations reporting their members' involvement in these, which is understandable considering that this organization draws its members mostly from farmers.

The Christian Heritage Party stood at 49 per cent, though that figure has surely increased since the questionnaires were returned. This is remarkable considering the youth of this organization. The CPJ has members in 51 per cent of the congregations, which might be considered somewhat disappointing in the light of the fact that it has been around a lot longer than the CHP. The CLAC was reported to have membership in 59 per cent of the congregations.

Single-issue involvement

Respondents were also allowed to indicate other ecumenical public witness groups with which members were involved. A rather high 77 per cent reported involvement in such organizations as Right to Life and other pro-life groups and organizations to preserve Sunday as a day of rest, etc. This may indicate that though people are not involved in the organizations mentioned in the previous paragraphs, they are nevertheless involved in some communal area of public witness. This is encouraging.

One might ponder, however, why there are as many if not more members of the CRC involved with single-issue pro-life organizations than with the more holistic approach of the CPJ. The CPJ clearly arose out of the Reformed witness that the CRC has promoted in Canada. It deals with a whole range of social justice issues in a holistic way. "Right to Life," though pursuing a worthwhile goal, is not as holistic, and has sometimes become overly confrontational in its approach, to say nothing of the fact that it is not a distinctly Christian organization. Perhaps many CRC members are involved in it because there is no local activity which is distinctly Reformed and because they are trying to bring a more holistic Reformed perspective to the pro-life movement.

At any rate, the area of corporate public witness will certainly continue to be a crucial area in which to address the challenge of being both Reformed and Canadian.

The degree and meaningfulness

With churches of which other denominations does the CRC have relations? The United Church was the most frequently mentioned as the church with which local congregations had at least some contact. This was followed by the Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Anglican, Roman Catholic, the Reformed Church of America, Mennonites, Lutheran, Free Reformed and the Canadian Reformed, in that order. Other denominations were also listed.

More contact with United churches then with the Reformed churches.

These results are not surprising when we consider that the contacts local congregations make with other churches depend as much, if not more so, on their geographical proximity as on their theological proximity. Yet, it remains true that CRCs have more contact with the United Church than with any other Church and that the Free Reformed and Canadian Reformed are mentioned least often.

A better picture of CRC ecumenical contacts might be gained by examining how respondents rated the meaningfulness and degree of that involvement. A rough composite rating would place the Reformed Church of America well ahead. It is followed by the Baptist, Mennonite, United, Presbyterian, Anglican, Lutheran, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic Churches. The Canadian Reformed and Free Reformed are, however, still on the bottom in this respect, too!

Looking at the results in more detail, it appears that especially the smaller churches (fewer than 50 families) are involved with the larger mainline churches. Perhaps the smaller congregations have a greater ecumenical involvement because it is required for a meaningful ministry for them. It may also suggest that there are many local congregations of "mainline churches" which are sufficiently biblical that local CRCs can pursue meaningful relations with them.

On the other side of the coin, it may also be true that the larger CRCs are so self-sufficient that they are not very aggressive ecumenically as congregations. (Though, as we saw earlier, their members as individuals do have contacts with other Christians in service ministries, etc.)

These results pose interesting questions for the Christian Reformed Church as a denomination, and for the role of the IRC; should it pursue more aggressively contacts with the Mennonite, Presbyterian, United and Baptist Churches at a denominational level? Ought there to be more contact at a denominational level in order to reflect what is happening in the clergy associations where CRC ministers are active? I am not speaking to organizational unity. But we could address areas in which there can be more effective co-operation; discussions that would help the ministries especially of the smaller churches and that would promote effective local clergy associations.

How crucial?

The IRC was also interested in knowing what prevented local congregations from being more active ecumenically.

Theological differences were given as the most problematic barrier to greater unity. Fifty per cent cited this as a limit. Lack of interest was named by 44 per cent as a definite limit, limits due to traditions were cited by 40 per cent and the ethnic barrier was listed by 37 per cent. All other limiting factors that we offered as possibilities were cited by no more than 20 per cent of the respondents.

About half the churches indicated that interchurch relations were a "peripheral" part of their ministry. Many respondents apologized for that fact or bemoaned it; some were more matter-of-fact about it. Slightly over 1/3 of the respondents felt that their congregation's ecumenical activities were "helpful." That left a small minority to say that ecumenical work was an "integral part" of their ministry and an even smaller minority dared to state that their ecumenical involvement was "crucial."

Remaining questions

In some ways, the questionnaire merely reinforced impressions that many of us already had. Nevertheless, it should help to focus on some basic questions: how is the CRC going to continue to be Reformed while seeking to have a greater impact and a more effective ministry in the society in which God has placed it? Will more interchurch relations and a seeking after Christian unity among Canadian churches threaten or enhance its witness?

How can it best expand its witness in geographical areas in which it is now present in small numbers and where its hallmark organizations are minimally present? How does it expand and become more effective where it is already large and numerous? What interchurch activity will allow it to maintain its distinctively Reformed witness while at the same time allowing its witness to be meaningfully expressed in a wider setting?

I hope and trust that in prayerful consideration and by the Holy Spirit's guidance the Christian Reformed Church can build on a great tradition and grow in being, in the first place, biblically Reformed and, in the second place, meaningfully Canadian.

Jake Binnema is a member of the Interchurch Relations Committee of the CRC. He lives in Dresden, Ont.

Photo: C.C. files
First Christian Reformed Church of Hamilton, Ont.

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Home mission accomplished

Inner court of Wellingstone Christian Home, Hamilton, Ont.

Margaret Tigchelaar

HAMILTON, Ont. — Certain days of our lives shine brighter in our memory than others. And some *sparkle!*

November 19, the day Wellingstone Christian Home was officially opened and dedicated, must have been one such day in the lives of those involved with planning and building this beautiful complex for the retirees in our Christian community.

It was standing room only in the common room when the meeting was called to order by Raymond Sikkema, pastor of the Mt. Hamilton Christian Reformed Church.

Several years ago a committee had been appointed by the council of that church and they had been given a mandate. Sikkema proceeded to read the original mandate and then invited the audience to judge for itself if the committee had fulfilled its task.

Unique plan

Gratitude was reflected in the scripture reading by Mr. Fred Hagen: Psalm 145 — I will extol You, my God and will bless your name for ever and ever. It was a testimony to the guidance and counsel of the Almighty.

The committee's chairman, Mr. Peter Brouwer, reviewed the events of the past two years, when, at a public meeting the committee presented a plan so unique, that 12 of the proposed units were spoken for that same weekend. So, the decision to go ahead was made.

The chairman wisely kept his remarks brief. He could have spoken for a week and not have touched on all the obstacles and hurdles the committee had to face before the actual building began. Instead, he focused on the finished product: 52 condominium-type units, attractively decorated and every one of them already leased.

In addition there is the beautiful common room, a library, craft rooms and several other amenities — and no mortgage, because of the uniqueness of the plan.

Thanks were expressed to many and congratulations extended by many. Space would fail us to mention them all. Let's just make one exception: Mr. J. Guetter, project supervisor for Demik Construction. His task was no easy one, especially when tenants began to move in during those hot, hot days of summer and the building was simply not ready. But he kept his cool, was courteous to everyone and had an encouraging word when one needed it. Thus he managed to keep a congenial atmosphere.

The chairman fittingly remembered those who had planned to move in with their life partner, but it was not to be, God called them home. These sad events, too, were part of the past two years.

Christ-centered home

With the ceremonies drawing to a close, the key duly presented, the audience was invited to sing "How great Thou art." Then, the unveiling of the commemorative stone: WELLINGSTONE CHRISTIAN HOME — 1988. Never mind that it began to rain; it was a feast day.

Several of the tenants had left their door ajar, so that guests could have a peek into the cozy apartments. And then it was on to the new Fellowship hall of the Mt. Hamilton CRC for delicious refreshments.

With the festivities over one could reflect: those who purchased a lease were not looking for investment, not for property, just for an environment which was in harmony with their background.

It was important to them that it would be a Christ-centered environment. The committee knew that and wanted to be used as an instrument to reach that goal.

In order to accomplish that they were willing to use their heads, their hearts and their hands. Wellingstone is a testimony to what God can do with willing people!

Margaret Tigchelaar lives in Dundas, Ont.

VanderZalm speech draws Christian ire

Reinder J. Klein

VANCOUVER — Last April a group of Vancouver Christians accused B.C. premier Bill VanderZalm of blasphemy in an open letter to the *Vancouver Sun*. Recently, on December 10, the same newspaper published another open letter in which a second group of local Christians publicly castigate VanderZalm for remarks he made about Christian standards.

The letter, by far the most serious in a flood of unflattering media reaction here to a previously little-noticed speech by VanderZalm, was a clear attempt to show that the premier says one thing in his public utterance while doing the very opposite in his policies.

Not all Christians here are displeased with their premier, of course. Campus Crusade for Christ liked the speech about Christian standards and ethics in government so much they videotaped it and sent it to 1,300 churches throughout the province, having first sought and obtained VanderZalm's approval.

Those in attendance when the speech was delivered, a coterie of Christian leaders and businesspeople, also appear to have appreciated it, for the audience is said to have applauded warmly at the end of the presentation.

Many others were happy with the speech, particularly with VanderZalm's promise his government would be guided by "pure Christian standards." In congregational prayers on Sunday after news of the speech broke, the Lord was thanked for giving the province such a fine leader.

Word and deed comparison

The dissenting Christians, however, most of them Catholic and among them some theologians and Bible scholars, were not so pleased. They hammered VanderZalm for the vast disparity they saw between his words and his government's actions in relationship to the poor people of B.C.

Here are sections of the letter as they appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* of December 10:

"It was reported in *(The Sun)* that you claim your government is guided by Christian ethics. It is our opinion that you are not following Christian ethics in your dealing with poor people.

"We the undersigned are followers of Jesus Christ and claim knowledge of Christian ethics. Let us compare your actions with Christ's teachings about the poor. Christ came to give good news to the poor, you bring them hardship and shame when your welfare rates condemn them to extreme poverty.

"Christ came to liberate the poor, you oppress them with policies such as your recent $50 cut in allowances to many single mothers. Christ commanded his followers to love the poor, you degrade them with your demeaning remarks about giving them all a shovel.

"Christ said we must feed the hungry, you obstruct the feeding of hungry children by refusing federal funds for school meals. Christ was on the side of the poor, you're opposed to them and say they will breed welfare generations."

No ridicule

The letter, prominently displayed on the front page of the *Sun's* weekend edition under the large headline "VanderZalm Hit For Stance On The Poor," was one of many expressions of anger and dismay carried by the media. It is also one that will be hardest to disregard.

Most of those who signed the letter are faith mates of the premier, fellow Catholics who are familiar with the principles and ethical standards of which he spoke. Unlike many other critics, they did not ridicule, belittle or mock VanderZalm. They simply contrasted the messages sent by the premier's words with those communicated by his political deeds.

Among other things, VanderZalm is reported to have said: "I will try to become a better and stronger leader with the knowledge that to best please the people I serve, I must first please my God."

He was also quoted as having said: "Real leadership comes from someone with a real purpose continuing on to fight and win when your overwhelming majority is you and your Lord Jesus Christ."

Complex issues

While VanderZalm often mentioned a code of ethics based on Christian principles, it seems he never made clear what these principles or standards actually are or, more importantly, how they might affect Socred policies.

Christians have struggled for centuries with the complex question of how biblical norms apply to government and politics. Many conflicting theories have been espoused and several opposing political movements have emerged, all of them claiming the same biblical basis.

Merely invoking the authority of Scripture and using the name of our Lord without entering into the specifics of possible applications is not enough. It would have been more helpful had VanderZalm revealed his thoughts on the implications for government of such biblical principles as justice, compassion, meekness, mercy, kindness, stewardship, love.

He didn't, which is a pity, for much of what people here generally associate with the VanderZalm administration has little to do with any of these.

Christ's reputation

And that's a serious matter. Having protested so volubly his strong adherence to pure Christian principles, all of the premier's behaviour will now be viewed as expressive of Christian principles.

Social policies that appear harsh and vindictive, for example, will now be considered a reflection of Christian compassion. Reluctance to settle with native people will be construed as an extension of God's justice. And the same goes for everything else done by the Socreds.

At stake is no longer the reputation of a mere mortal or his power-politicking party. The ante has been raised, and the onus is now squarely on the shoulders of B.C.'s Social Credit government to forego expediency, to sacrifice self-interest, to restrain the rich and powerful and to protect the many who are weak and in need of assistance.

VanderZalm can be assured of the prayerful support of B.C.'s Christians, but he and his colleagues would be well-advised not to push the notion that their current bad reputation and low standing in practically all the polls are consequences of their Christ-like political conduct these past two years.

The open letter in the *Sun* shows with devastating clarity that not all Christians are persuaded the direction of past and present Socred policies in solidly based on scriptural norms. And it won't do for him or any other Socred to simply dismiss these critics, too, as yet another horde of Marxist devils.

Paranoia can be harmful. In that delusive state even friends are seen as enemies. Yet, good friends *do* sometimes criticize, and they sometimes do so on the basis of Christian principles. Were the Socreds to forget that, more Christians will end up throwing the book at them.

The good book!

Reinder Klein is an educator and writer who intends to come to Toronto in the new year.

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Births

BESTMAN:
We are thankful to God for the gift of our third child, JEREMY PETER, who was born on Dec. 3, 1988, weighing 3945 grams, 55 cm. long. A brother for Reuben and Andrea. Fourth grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. Aart and Jo Bestman of the Netherlands; eighth grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. Peter and Ann Cupido, Calgary, Alta.
Home address: Miranda and Hank Bestman, 10319-155 Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 2M1.

BOOTSMA:
Harvey and Melinda are thankful and happy to announce the birth of their second daughter, SARAH JANINE, born Nov. 13, 1988, in Winnipeg, Man. A little sister for Claire and another grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Bootsma and Dr. and Mrs. Jan Oosterhuis of London, Ont.
Home address: 238 Portland Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2M 1K3.

MORSE:
What a joy! On Dec. 21, 1988, God has again enriched our family with the gift of life: RACHEL MARIE INEKE, a 9 lb. 3 oz. daughter for Peter and Marguerite Morse (nee Parlevliet). A sister for Joshua, a niece for Nick, Mike, Annemarie and Ken Parlevliet, a granddaughter for Oma Ineke Brouwer-Parlevliet and a great-granddaughter for "old" - Oma Brouwer in Holland.
Home address: 4031 Front St., Niagara Falls, ON L2G 6G5.

VAN OENEN:
Bill and Theresa thank God for the safe arrival of their fifth child, ALEX JOHN, born Nov. 17, 1988, weighing 8 lbs., 5 oz. Alex is welcomed into the family by his sisters and brothers: Rachael, Miriam, Jake and Kyle. Alex is the eighth grandchild for John and Ida Vis of Thunder Bay and the 22nd grandchild for Oma W. Van Oenen of Goderich.
Home address: R.R.#3, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5N5.

Personal

Young Dutchman is looking for farmer who wants to retire and is willing to and interested in share farming, private mortgage or other ways to take over farm. Write: View Immigration, Kees Melis, c/o Bt. Somerville, R.R.#1, Stayner, ON L0M 1S0, or phone: (705) 428-2560.

Births

VANDER VEER:
"Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward." (Ps. 127:3)
"For this child we prayed."
And here he is, to make his home among us, SAMUEL EDWARD, born Dec. 4, 1988, weighing 8 lbs. 12 oz. Samuel, we welcome you into the Vander Veer family. You're lovely and we all love you!
Proud parents: Jack & Anita Vander Veer.
Thrilled grandparents: Ed Vander Veer and Hennie Vander Veer of Ottawa, and Ann and Pieter Horst of Montreal.
Great-grandparents: Jaap and Anna Vander Veer of Cornwall, and Albert and Dora De Vries of Ottawa.
Aunt Mary Ann and Uncle Jeff Shutz of Grand Rapids.
Uncle Mike Vander Veer of Ottawa.
Correspondence address: 1205 Ottillia S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49507.

WIND:
"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." (2 Cor. 9:15)
We give thanks and praise to our Lord for entrusting to our care another of his precious little ones, our seventh child, KEVIN MICHAEL, born Sunday, Dec. 11, 1988, weighing 9 lbs. Kevin is joyfully welcomed by sisters and brother: Monica, Karen, Jeremy, Linda, Rachel and Cheryl. A new grandson for Mr. and Mrs. A. Ypma, of Taber, Alta., and Mr. and Mrs. J. Wind, of Surrey, B.C.
Home address: Mike and Cathy Wind, P.O. Box 2783, Taber, AB T0K 2G0.

Marriage

Our God, in his providential care, bent our hearts and our lives towards each other, creating new happiness.

JEAN ZOMER
and
BASTIAN A. LANGENDOEN

invite you to share their joy and celebrate with them as they exchange wedding vows before God and his people on Saturday, Jan. 14, 1989, at 11:30 a.m. Covenant Chr. Ref. Church, 278 Parnell Rd., St. Catharines, Ont. We are grateful for the loving support of our children who will caringly participate in our ceremony.
Future address: 1321 Hansler Rd., R.R.#2, Welland, ON L3B 5N5.
Please regard your presence as your gift to us.
Standing reception following the ceremony.

For Sale

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Yes, our English pages are interesting too.
the Windmill Herald

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Klaaske and Pieter Hoekstra (nee Lep) on their 60th wedding anniversary.

St. Anna Parochie Edmonton
1929 January 24 1989
With joy and thankfulness to God, we as children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will celebrate the 60th wedding anniversary of

KLAASKE and PIETER HOEKSTRA
(nee Lep)

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them in the years to come.
With love from all of us:
Eeke & George Pars
Trix & Andy Cupido
Bill & Ann Hoekstra
Shirley & Carl Van Spengen
George & Ena Hoekstra
20 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.
Home address: 10147-79 St., Edmonton, AB T6A 3G4.

1944 January 6 1989
"Praise the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits." (Ps. 103:2)
With joy and thanksgiving to our God for his blessings and faithfulness we celebrated with our parents and grandparents

BEREND and KLAZINA PIERIK
(nee Bouwman)

their 45th wedding anniversary.
Jannie & Martin Nyland — LaGlace, Alta.
Kathleen & Chris (fiance), Beverley, Stanley, Darren
Kay & George Bowman — Calgary, Alta.
Brenda, Brent
Peter & Inez Pierik — Red Deer, Alta.
Michael, Michelle
Herma & Cor Pikkert — Red Deer, Alta.
Corinne, Kevin, Trevor
Victor Pierik — at home
It is our prayer that God will continue to bless you, together with all of us.
Home address: 5531 38th St., Red Deer, AB T4N 0X7.

Anniversaries

1934 January 9 1989
With great joy and thanksgiving to our faithful God, we announce the 55th wedding anniversary of our parents

JAKE and GRACE SCHARFT
(nee Lakema)

"You whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and grey hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you." (Isa. 46:3,4)
As He has in the past, may God continue to bless you in the future.
Congratulations Mom and Dad from your grateful children:
Harry Scharft — Haney, B.C.
Hank & Janny Van Eyk — Fort Langley, B.C.
Bob & Gerda Scharft — New Westminster, B.C.
Bill & Anne Venema — Abbotsford, B.C.
Hank & Alice Roos — Abbotsford, B.C.
Jake & Tammy Scharft — Holland Landing, Ont.
Ralph & Margaret De Bruyn — Vancouver, B.C.
Charlie & Anita Nagtegaal — Langley, B.C.
and 25 grandchildren, six great-grandchildren.

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Obituaries

December 14, 1988
Saddened by her passing, but thankful to God that she could be in our midst for so many years, we share with you that quite unexpectantly the Lord took home

Mrs. J. ZWART
(nee de Jong)

at the age of 83. She was predeceased by her husband Rev. Dirk Zwart, and son Dirk.
"We know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him." (Eccles. 3:14, 15)
Her children:
Peter & Anna Zwart — Burlington, Ont.
Bob & Ineke VanRijn — Hamilton, Ont.
Edward & Janet Zwart — Grimsby, Ont.
Piet & Hilly Bootsman — Enkhuizen, the Neth.
Arie & Else Sluys — Rijsenhout, the Neth.
Nienke Zwart — Rijsenhout, the Neth.
Sjanty Zwart — Halfweg, the Neth.
Andy & Dorien Zwart — Burlington, Ont.
21 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.
A private funeral was followed by a memorial service in the Gereformeerde Kerk of Halfweg, the Neth., on Dec. 19, 1988.
Correspondence address: 5236 Verhoeven Rd., Burlington, ON L7L 3A9.

Psalm 121:1,2
Suddenly, on Sunday, Dec. 11, 1988, our Lord in his infinite wisdom called home

JAN (John) VANDERTOL

His favourite hymn was "Amazing Grace."
Dear husband of Jantje (Janet) VanderTol (nee Terpstra)
Dear father of:
Andrew & Nellie VanderTol — Calgary, Alta.
Donald & Kay VanderTol — Edmonton, Alta.
Harold & Shirley VanderTol — Sydenham, Ont.
Harry & Wendy VanderTol — Bramalea, Ont.
Obe & Kathryn VanderTol — Erin, Ont.
John & Carol VanderTol — Brockville, Ont.
Loving grandfather of 16 grandchildren; dear brother of Hessel and Obe VanderTol of the Netherlands. Predeceased by daughter Oepkje Martha and granddaughter Kimberley Elaine.
Funeral services were held at First Chr. Ref. Church, Kingston, Ont., on Dec. 13, 1988, Rev. Carl Tuyl officiating.
Home address: 24 Pember Pl., Kingston, ON K7M 2P7.

For Rent

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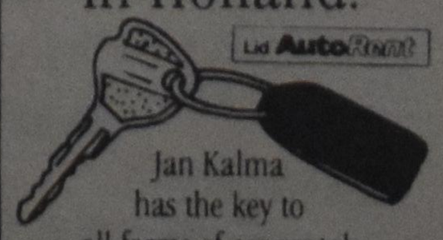
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We do ask those who submit communications to preferably send typed material, or otherwise messages written in clearly legible, black print. Include such information as name of sender, address, fax or telephone number.

Stan de Jong

Classified

Obituaries

Andyk, Holland — Aylmer, Ontario
1909 — 1988

On December 13, 1988, at the age of 79 years,

CORNELIS BROER

was transformed to glory and went to be with the Lord whom he strived to serve.
He lived and died in the knowledge that "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
He was a charter member of the Aylmer Christian Reformed Church, serving many terms as elder, several as clerk.
Dad was a charter member of several societies as well, including:
— The Immanuel Christian School Society, serving several terms as president.
— The Golden Age Club, serving as its president since 1971.
— The Heritage Place Association, serving as board member and resident manager.

He was loved and respected by many as a helper, guide and friend.
Dad and Mother were privileged to celebrate 58 years of marriage on December 11th.
We mourn, but are comforted by the knowledge that Dad stands before God, in clothes washed white by the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 9:9-17.
Nantje de Jong Broer — Aylmer, Ont.
Dirk & Marian (Gritter) Broer — Aylmer, Ont.
Janet & Doug Hunsperger
Nancy & Jeff Robinson
Judy & Murray Sluys
Case & Shelley Broer
Steve & Lorraine Broer
Carol & Todd Smith
Grada & Walter Zylstra — Dunnville, Ont
Henry & Nelly Zylstra
Ed & Elaine Zylstra
Ken & Lois Zylstra
Teresa & Dave Culver
Darrell Zylstra
Josephine & Andy VanDyk — Ingersoll, Ont.
Rick & Darlene VanDyk
Harry & Janice VanDyk
Tom VanDyk
Jody VanDyk
Ed & Thea (Weverink) Broer — Aylmer, Ont.
Jim & Michelle Broer
Jennifer Broer
Leo Broer
Monique Broer
Tilly & Don Stafford — Aylmer, Ont.
Karen Stafford
Tim Stafford & Tony Geraci — engaged
Scott Stafford
Harry & Hilda (Jongsma) Broer — Aylmer, Ont.
Heidi Broer
Marcel Broer
Laura Broer
Dora & Norman Haaksma — London, Ont.
Yvonne Haaksma
Belinda Haaksma
Amanda Haaksma
and 25 great-grandchildren.
Funeral service took place on Dec. 15, 1988, from the Aylmer Chr. Ref. Church, Dr. Henry J. Boekhoven officiating. Burial followed in the Aylmer Cemetery.
Home address: 110 Caverly Road, Apartment #23, Aylmer, ON N5H 2P4.

Teachers

Central Alberta Christian High School Society

Lacombe, Alberta, anticipates the beginning of a Christian high school in September 1989. Inquiries are invited from experienced, devoted, versatile and hard-working teachers who would be involved in the organization of programs, facilities, promotion and curriculum development. Submit all inquiries or resumes to:

John Busaan, R.R.#1, Blackfalds, AB T0M 0J0
phone: (403) 885-4416
or
Mrs. Grace Stolte, R.R.#1, Blackfalds, AB T0M 0J0
phone: (403) 885-4235

Calvin Christian School Hamilton

invites applications for the following teaching positions:

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Senior grades, starting September 1989

If you would like to join a dynamic teaching team offering quality Christian education to the greater Hamilton area, please contact A. Ben Harsevoort, Principal, for application forms at (416) 388-2645.

Teachers

Trinity Christian School in Burlington, Ont. is looking for a

TEACHING PRINCIPAL

for September 1989

We are an interdenominational K-8 school with 182 students, five full-time and four part-time teachers.
Applications are requested by January 15, but will be accepted until January 31, 1989. Please send resume and references to:

Recruiting Committee
c/o Trinity Christian School
650 Walker's Line, Burlington, ON L7N 2E7
Tel.: (416) 634-3052 or (416) 335-7099

Georgetown District Christian School

Halton Hills, Ont.

invites applications for the position of

teaching principal

to begin August 1, 1989

G.D.C.S. is an established interdenominational parental school (K-Gr. 8), located in Halton Hills.
We have 160 students and nine teachers.

The ideal candidate:
— will be an experienced administrator and teacher
— will encourage the development of Christian education in a growing community.

Familiarity with and interest in developing the computer program for our school would be an asset.
Please direct your letter of application and resume by January 31, 1989, to:

Helena VanderWal,
Chairman of Education Committee
65 Cook St., Acton, ON L7J 1Z5
Phone: (519) 853-3234

Clinton and District Christian School needs an experienced

teacher for the senior grades

commencing September 1989
Ability to teach physical education and/or music is an asset.
The possibility to combine this position with the

vice-principalship

is open. Interested persons please send resume to:
Mr. Ralph Schuurman, Principal
Clinton and District Christian School
P.O. Box 658, Clinton, ON N0M 1L0
For information you can call the principal at
(519) 482-7851 (school) or (519) 482-7088 (home)

Toronto Central Christian School
invites applications for a

TEACHING PRINCIPAL

TO BEGIN September 1989

TCCS is a small interdenominational school located in downtown Toronto. We have three classes with multi-grades from K-8. We are looking for an experienced, energetic person, willing to teach multiple grades and be the administrator. Interest and knowledge about teaching with an integrated curriculum is necessary. French and music skills would be an asset.

Are you looking for a challenge?
Send your letter and resume to:
G. Dekker
Toronto Central Christian School
55 Salisbury Ave., Toronto, ON M4X 1C5
Tel: (416) 968-2036 or call evenings (416) 466-6304

Teachers

SASKATOON, Sask: Saskatoon Christian School is receiving applications for a **teacher/principal** for the 1989-90 school year. Grades to be taught are **6,7,8.** We are an interdenominational school, associated with Christian Schools International. We require a leader with a valid teaching certificate. Preference will be given to applicants with teaching and administrative experience. Interested applicants, please forward resume and/or inquiries to: Saskatoon Christian School, 2410 Haultain Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7J 1R3. Phone (306) 343-1494 or Wes Vanstone at (306) 374-6885.

PETERBOROUGH: Rhema Christian School is a vital and growing non-denominational school established to serve the Christian community in the Peterborough area. As a result of increased enrolment the Education Committee solicits teacher applications for openings in the **primary grades** for September 1989. Please send resume and request for application forms to: Mr. Ray Hendriks, Principal, 3195 Parkhill Rd. E. Peterborough, ON K9L 1B8. Or phone (705) 743-1400.

NEWMARKET: Holland Marsh District Christian School, requires a **Grade 2** teacher from March 28 to June 28, 1989. Please send resume to: Mrs. Corrie Bootsma, Vice-Principal, R.R.#2, NewMarket, ON L3Y 4V9.
Phone (416) 775-3701 (school) or (416) 895-7283 (home).

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Calendar of Events returns next week

Classified/Events

Help wanted

The Huron District Christian Secondary School Society seeks application for a resourceful and creative person to assess the feasibility of a Christian high school in the Clinton area and possibly prepare a working model of such a school. Please send resume to: Margaret Buffinga, Secretary, R.R.#1, Clinton, ON N0M 1L0.

Help wanted

Greenhouse worker(s) needed in Niagara Peninsula. No experience necessary. Phone (416) 892-3285 or 892-3657.

Dordt College

is beginning its search for a

Vice President for Academic Affairs

A doctoral degree is required; administrative experience is preferred. Candidates must be committed to a biblical, Reformed theology and educational perspective. Nominations or inquiries regarding this position should be sent by February 15, 1989 to:

Secretary
Search Committee
Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250

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Vice Pres. for Academic Affairs
Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250

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Maple Structures, Fergus, Ontario, newly-established steel fabrication shop, has the following openings: **fabricator supervisor,** a **production welder (Mig)** and **machine operator.** Full benefit package with excellent wages. Please forward your resume to:

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Taber Christian School

operated by the Society for Christian Education in Southern Alberta is in need of a teaching

PRINCIPAL

for the 1989/90 school term. Prospective applicants should have both teaching and administrative experience in Christian education.

The school, an attractive, new facility, has been in operation for the past four years, providing Christ-centred education to students in kindergarten through grade nine. If you feel qualified to accept this leadership challenge please direct your letter of application to:

Mr. Arie Veluw, President
Society for Christian Education
in Southern Alberta
802 — 6 Avenue North
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1H 0S1
Telephone: (403) 738-4458 or (403) 327-4223

Dr. Henri J. Nouwen

speaks on

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January 12, 1989 at 8:00 p.m.

After nearly two decades of teaching at the Theological Institute in Utrecht, Holland, and at the Universities of Notre Dame, Yale and Harvard in the United States, **Dr. Henri J. Nouwen** now shares his life with mentally handicapped people at L'Arche community of Daybreak in Toronto. He is the author of 22 books.

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Church news

Christian Reformed Church

Called

— to Drayton, Ont., Rev. Paul Stadt of First, Barrie, Ont.

Accepted

— to Cephas, Peterborough, Ont., Rev. James Poelman of Wallaceburg, Ont.

— to First, Owen Sound, Ont., Rev. Harry Vander Windt of Dunnville, Ont.

Declined

— to Clinton, Ont., Rev. Harry Vander Windt of Dunnville, Ont.

Correction re:
Dec. 20 issue

Ken Ritsema *remains* stated clerk of Classis Eastern Canada. (His address is: 148 Drive In Road E., Pembroke, ON K8A 7P1.)

Durk Bylsma and Bill Byker are, respectively, the "official clerk" and "stated clerk" (non-council member) of the Williamsburg, Ont. CRC.

We were batting .1000 that week! (We accept full responsibility for error(s). This would be a good time, however, to encourage those who send in information to state it as clearly as possible.) Thank you!

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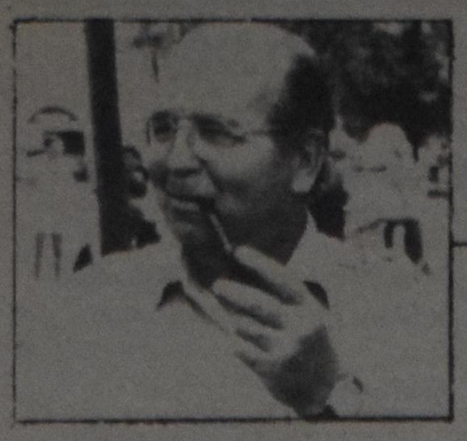

Kommentaar met een knipoog

Herman de Jong

De vliegende dominee

De Here zegene u .... Het jongetje gluurde naar de dominee. Eventjes maar! Het was zonde als je onder het bidden je ogen open deed. Maar misschien gaf het niet zoveel helemaal aan het eind van de dienst. Sommige ouderlingen keken ook door de kerk. Dat zag hij best, hoor! En een gebed was dit immers niet. De dominee vouwde niet eens zijn handen! Straks lekker naar huis.

't Was Nieuwjaarsmorgen en er zou wel weer een heleboel visite komen. Die emmers met oliebollen moesten immers op, had moeder voor de kerk lachend gezegd. Hij hoopte maar dat Jansje niet meekwam. Dat was zijn nichtje. Moest hij in de gewone kamer met haar spelen. Dat liep vast weer uit op "vader en moedertje." Wilde ze hem zoenen. Zo maar op de mond. En een hele lange. Vies hoor! Maar vaders en moeders deden dat elke dag, zei Jansje. Bà, wat ze er aan vonden. Hij wist nu al heel zeker dat hij nooit ging trouwen.

Trouwen is houwen, zei Opa met de sik. Zijn Opa zonder sik was vorig jaar net dood gegaan, maar die was ook lang zo aardig niet. Keek altijd zo streng. Dat kwam van die andere kerk, zei Mam. Daar zongen ze de psalmen zo langzaam, en zoveel versjes, dat ze soms twee uur in de kerk zaten. Opa zonder sik had hem eens meegenomen. Toen hij thuis kwam, zaten ze al te eten. "Dat is eens, maar nooit weer," had hij wijs gezegd. "Nou, nou," zei vader. Maar Mams lachte.

En behoede u ...., de mouwen van dominee's zwarte jurk leken op vleugels. Na elk kort zinnetje bewoog hij zijn armen op en neer. Alsof hij zo van de preekstoel af zou vliegen. Misschien wilde dominee de mensen in de kerk er aan herinneren, dat er engelen door de kerk vlogen. Want de engeltjes waren altijd heel dicht bij je om op je te passen. Dat had moeder hem verteld.

Zijn eigen engel, die 's nachts aan het voeteneinde van zijn bedje stond, vloog daar ook. Je kon ze niet zien, die engelen. Maar vleugels hadden ze wel. Hoe zou zijn eigen engel anders zomaar van zijn slaapkamer in de kerk kunnen komen? Die vond het heel fijn als hij heel stil zat en op zijn pepermunt zoog, inplaats van het kapot te bijten. Knap! Kreeg hij een duw van moeder. Zijn engel gaf hem nooit een duwtje, maar die keek vast heel droevig!

★★★★

De Here doe zijn aanschijn over u lichten .... Tussen de haartjes van zijn oogleden zag hij ineens de armen van de dominee heviger bewegen. Net als de zwarte vleugels van een kraai als ie plots van zijn prooi opvloog. Nou ging dominee echt vliegen! Mensen, mensen, daar ging ie! Boven de preekstoel vloog hij! Als hij nou maar niet tegen een engel botste. Of dwars door al die engelen heen vloog! Maar de engelen bleven hem wel uit de weg. Die waren net als vleermuizen, botsen nergens tegen an.

Maar de dominee? Nou zat hij verdikke bijna tegen de muur naast het orgel. Als de organist nu zou gaan spelen, blies die hem wel bij die muur vandaan. Maar zingen en bidden ... dat ging niet tegelijk!

★★★★

En geve u vrede .... gelukkig, de dominee zwenkte net op tijd weg. De engelen hadden dat natuurlijk ook wel gezien. Wilden natuurlijk niet dat dominee 's middags met een buil op zijn hoofd de preekstoel opkwam, met een kletsnatte koude doek om zijn hoofd. Had ie gisteren zelf nog om zijn hoofd gehad. Was langs de trapleuning naar beneden gegleden en zijn hoofd kwam met een vaart tegen de houten bal. Dat deed verrotte zeer, maar hij had niet gehuild want broer Piet zat in de keuken worteltjes te schrappen en die pestte hem alstie huilde.

★★★★

Amen .... Hoe kwam de dominee nou zo gauw weer achter de dikke Bijbel? Daar snapte hij niks van. Hij keek omhoog naar vaders gezicht. Die keek of er niks gebeurd was. "Zag u hem ook, Pa?" "Zag wie?" "De dominee!" "Ach joh, je ziet ze vliegen," zei Pa.

★★★★

Tussen vader en moeder in liep het jongetje naar huis. Moest grote stappen nemen. Moeder had haast, moest voor de koffie zorgen want er kwam een heleboel visite. Tegelijkertijd wilden vader en moeder hem een hand geven om hem mee te sjorren. Net oftie een heel klein jongetje was. Resoluut stak hij zijn vuistjes in de zakken van zijn jasje. "Lopen jullie maar vooruit, ik kom wel," zei hij, "'k ben nu groot, hoor!" Vader lachte hard. "Wou je ook niet op mijn schouder zitten?" Het jongetje schudde zijn hoofd krachtig en spuwde op de grond. Opa met de sik deed dat, dus zou het wel goed zitten. "Foei," zei moeder, "dat mag je nooit weer doen, hoor!"

★★★★

Thuis gekomen moest hij lief met Jansje in de achterkamer spelen. Voorzichtig schoof hij de schuifdeuren op een kiertje .... kwam de sigarenrook ook in de achterkamer .... rook zo lekker!

★★★★

Jansje opperde dat ze vader en moedertje zouden spelen. " 'k Ben gek," zei hij, "ik zal wel oppassen om met jou te trouwen, nee hoor, twee geloven op een kussen, daar slaapt de duivel tussen ... jij gaat immers naar d'andere kerk van 't half uurtje. Je zingen ook veuls te vlug, en jul' dominee het een licht pak aan," deed hij Opa met sik na. "En ik wor immers dominee, dan kan'k geen vrouw der bij 'ebbe."

★★★★

"Jij kan ommers niet eens preke," zei Jansje koel. "Ja wel, hoor." "Nietes!" "Welles!" "La' me dan es zien?" Daar had het jongetje op gewacht. Klom op een stoel. "De genade van ...." "Je mot bij 'et begin beginne," zeurde Jansje, "preek maar over het kindje in de krib, dat hew we pas op Zondagschool 'ad."

Moeder bracht hen kopjes chocola en vier oliebollen. "We spelen kerkje, Mams," zei het jongetje lief, "luister maar!" "Ik heb geen tijd hoor, preek maar fijn door," zei Mams lachend. Het jongetje begon het kerstverhaal en samen zongen ze van de herdertjes bij nachte. Toen kwam het grote moment. Hij spreidde zijn armpjes. "De genade van ...." Hij deed het net als de dominee met zijn kale hoofd. Heftiger bewoog hij zijn armen. Sprak de woorden nog langzamer.

Jansje onderbrak hem. "Zo zitte we 'ier om vier uur nog, zeg nou maar ame." En daar was het jongetje juist aan toe. Teleurgesteld sprong hij van de stoel. Misschien had je een hele zee engelen nodig om je op te lichten. Toch jammer. Jansje zou naar de voorkamer gerend zijn. Stomverbaasd zou de visite hem tegen het plafond hebben zien hangen ....

"Ik speul nie meer," zei hij tegen het nichtje.

Herman de Jong woont in Jordan Station, Ont.

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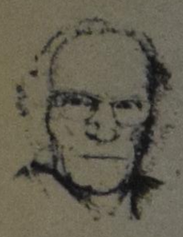

Pensive Dutchie

Syrt Wolters

Wat denk je van de nieuwe hymnal van de Christian Reformed Church?

Syrt Wolters

Het is al weer een paar jaar geleden, dat ik een artikel in deze rubriek schreef waarin ik nogal critisch was omtrent de hymnal die we toen hadden. Van verschillende kanten kreeg ik toen bijval, maar ongeveer in dezelfde mate boze critiek. Hoe durfde ik ons liederenboek becritiseren? En dan nog wel enkele van de meest populaire gezangen!

Wel, we hebben nu een nieuw psalm- en gezangboek. In onze gemeente waren de nieuwe boeken al gauw besteld en we zingen er al verscheidene maanden uit. Persoonlijk denk ik dat ons nieuwe boek een grote vooruitgang is. 'k Heb nog niet met alle nummers kennis gemaakt, maar voorzover ik er wel kennis mee gemaakt heb, geloof ik dat het een goede vooruitgang is, ondanks het feit, dat sommige wijzen niet gemakkelijk te leren zijn. Een goede verbetering is het meer duidelijke onderscheid tussen de schriftuurlijke psalmen en de gezangen, hoewel dit verschil nog wel duidelijker had kunnen zijn. Waarom niet strikt gehouden aan de nummering zoals die in de Bijbel voorkomt? De gezangen hadden gerust weer met nummer één kunnen beginnen, volgens mij.

'k Ben geneigd te geloven dat ik zelf ook nog een schimmetje invloed gehad heb ten opzichte van een bepaald gezang. Het gezang: "Thank, thank now all your God." Het tweede couplet eindigde met de volgende zin: "And keep us from all ills, In this world and the next!" wat voor onzin is dat? Alsof we in de hemel nog te doen hebben met ziekte! Maar we hebben het jarenlang met volle borst gezongen! Waarom ook niet? 't Staat toch in het gezangboek! Zo waren er wel enkele liederen meer, waarvan ik het geen verlies gevonden zou hebben als ze niet weer opgenomen waren. Sommigen staan er weer in.

Maar over het algemeen ben ik heel blij met deze nieuwe uitgave. Er is grotere verscheidenheid. Er zijn ook nieuwere liederen bijgekomen. Sommigen vinden dat geen vooruitgang. Er is toch nog onder ons de neiging om alles wat oud is als goed te beschouwen en alles wat nieuw is af te wijzen, alleen maar omdat het nieuw is: Was het oude soms niet goed meer? Wat was er verkeerd met het oude?

Waar is de aanpak van vroeger?

Vooral onder de ouderen onder ons, zo van mijn eigen leeftijd, tref ik er verscheidene aan, die van het nieuwe boek niet veel moeten hebben. Dat verbaast me enigszins. Zijn het niet juist de immigranten van die leeftijd, die de 'nieuwe' stap van emigratie gewaagd hebben? Veertig jaren terug waren diezelfde mensen helemaal niet schuw van een grote nieuwe verandering. Integendeel, ze zijn in menig opzicht een voorbeeld geweest van het gaan van nieuwe wegen. Ook in de kerk.

Mensen die hun levenlang gewoon waren om te zingen uit het Nederlandse psalmboek met achterin wat gezangen, kwamen hier in de kerk en moesten radicaal omzwaaien en een geheel nieuw liedboek aanleren, enkele uit het Nederlands vertaalde psalmen daargelaten. Het overgrote deel moest geheel opnieuw geleerd worden.

'k Heb er toen niemand over horen klagen. Men aanvaardde dat als een consequentie van emigreren naar een Engelssprekend land. En het nam helemaal niet lang, of we zongen al de voor ons vreemde gezangen lustig mee.

Hoe komt het dan, dat we nu ineens zo schuw zijn voor de verandering? We zijn toch nog niet aan het aftakelen? Je zou het haast wel zeggen als je sommigen hoort klagen over de nieuwe gezang-bundel.

Een voorbeeld zijn

Nee, mensen van mijn leeftijd, we moeten tonen dat we nog genoeg mentaal vermogen hebben om deze bundel welkom te heten. Sinds de laatste uitgave van nu meer dan 30 jaar geleden, heeft de Heilige Geest ook niet stil gezeten, maar jongere kinderen Gods in vervoering gebracht en ons liederen gegeven, waardoor wij ons kunnen laten bemoedigen en troosten. Als we bij het oude gebleven waren zou de kerk heel wat gemist hebben.

Syrt Wolters woont in Victoria, B.C.

Heer, ik heb geen tijd

Ik ben uitgegaan, Heer
Buiten gingen de mensen.

Zij gingen,
Zij kwamen,
Zij holden.

De fietsen hadden haast,
De auto's hadden haast,
De vrachtwagens hadden haast,
De straat had haast,
De stad had haast,
De hele wereld had haast.
Zij holden om geen tijd te verliezen,
Zij joegen achter de tijd aan,
Om de tijd in te halen,
Om tijd te winnen.
Tot ziens, mijnheer, neem me niet kwalijk,
maar ik heb geen tijd.
Ik kom nog wel eens terug, ik kan niet wachten,
Ik heb geen tijd.
Ik eindig deze brief, want
Ik heb geen tijd.
Ik zou u graag geholpen hebben, maar
Ik heb geen tijd.
Ik kan 't niet aannemen, want
Ik heb geen tijd.
Ik kan niet nadenken, niet lezen,
Ik heb geen tijd.
Ik zou wel willen bidden, maar
Ik heb geen tijd.

Zo Heer, rennen de mensen achter de tijd aan.
Zij trekken hollend over de aarde, gehaast,
Elkaar verdringend,
Overladen,
Verdwaasd,
Overwerkt.
En zij komen er nooit, zij hebben tijdgebrek,
Niettegenstaande al hun inspanningen hebben
zij tijdgebrek.
Hun tijdgebrek is zelfs zeer groot.
Heer, Gij moet U in uw berekening vergist hebben
Er is ergens een vergissing over de gehele linie,
De uren zijn te kort, de dagen zijn te kort,
De levens zijn te kort.

Gij, Heer, die buiten de tijd staat,
Gij glimlacht wanneer Gij ons met de tijd ziet worstelen.
Gij weet wat Gij doet.
Gij vergist U niet wanneer Gij de tijd onder de mensen uitdeelt.
Gij geeft aan een ieder de tijd om te doen,
Wat Gij wilt dat hij doen zal.
Maar men moet geen tijd verliezen, geen tijd verspillen,
Geen tijd doden,
Want de tijd is een geschenk, dat Gij ons geeft,
Maar het is een vergankelijk geschenk,
Een geschenk dat men niet bewaren kan.

Michel Quist
Uit "Het Correspondentieblad" der PCOV

WANT TO APPEAL YOUR ASSESSMENT?

You still have time to appeal your 1988 assessment if you feel your home or business property has been improperly assessed. Your assessment is important because the amount of property tax you will pay in 1989 depends on it. The assessed value of your property is multiplied by the municipal and school mill rates to determine your property taxes.

Notices of Property Valuation were mailed to property owners and tenants whose assessments have changed since last year. Open house information sessions were held in your area to give you the opportunity to ask questions and correct any errors.

The Assessment Roll was delivered to your municipality on December 20, 1988 and will be used to calculate the taxes you will pay in 1989. You can review the Roll at your municipal office during regular business hours. If you believe your property has been improperly assessed and you have not yet registered an appeal, you still have until January 10, 1989 to mail or deliver your appeal to the Assessment Review Board. ***And remember, even if you did not receive a Notice of Property Valuation, you still have the right to appeal.***

Appeal deadline — January 10, 1989

The Assessment Review Board is an independent tribunal under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General. It is intended to provide you with an additional opportunity to have your assessment reviewed if, in your opinion, it is not fair and equitable with the assessment of similar properties in your area. The Review Board is more informal and relaxed than a regular court of law. You may present your own case, retain a lawyer, or ask a relative or friend to speak as your agent.

To help you in filing your appeal, Notice of Appeal forms are available from the Assessment Review Board, your Regional Assessment Office, or your municipal office. You can also use the reverse side of a Notice of Property Valuation, or write a letter giving the property address and roll number along with your reasons for appealing. Appeals should be forwarded to the Regional Registrar of the Assessment Review Board at the address shown below.

If you appealed your previous assessment, it will be necessary to lodge an appeal against your assessment with the Assessment Review Board each year, if the appeal against your previous assessment has not yet been settled, or your 1988 Notice of Property Valuation does not reflect the most recent decision of the Board.

In those parts of Ontario designated for French Language Services, you can appear before a bilingual (English/French) Appeal Board. Please check the space provided on your appeal form if you wish to use this service.

Ontario Ministry of Revenue

Regional Registrar
ASSESSMENT REVIEW BOARD
MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
80 Bloor St. W., Ste 701
Toronto, Ontario M6S 1L9

Books

Robert VanderVennen, book review editor

Adventists moving toward mainstream

Adventism in America, edited by Gary Land, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986, 301 pp., $14.95, U.S. Reviewed by Paul Schrotenboer, retired general secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

This is a history of the Adventist movement in America, from the Millerite pre-Adventist beginnings in the 1830s and 1840s to the present. Written by Adventists, it is a remarkably objective overview of this church which began as a sect and "has moved a long way toward becoming a church" (230).

The Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) has in a century-and-a-half attained a membership of over 5 million, most of whom are not in the country of its birth (U.S.) but in the Third World. With its stress on a seventh day Sabbath (based on the Old Testament) and with its emphasis on the imminent return of Christ, SDA teaching joins the beginning and the end of human history.

The book is characterized by a welcome openness, a sign that the church has come enough of age to display its internal struggles and mistakes without fear of losing its sense of identity as a unique body.

What one can say on the basis of this self-appraisal is that there are definite trends in the SDA community:
— a movement from being a sect to becoming a denomination; its conception of mission has to some degree broken down its sectarian exclusiveness (170).
— a change from strong criticism of, to some participation (on a non-member basis) in the WCC Commission on Faith and Order; and
— a trend from an esteem for the writings of Ellen G. White almost equal to that for the Bible, to the acknowledgement that Ellen White used historians as sources of information (hence did not receive all her views directly from God) and made historical errors in her writings (222).

One gains the strong impression that the SDA Church wants to be reorganized as a respectable, theologically conservative Protestant denomination. As Land recognizes, his church still has a way to go. Besides the claims of prophesy for Ellen White, conservative evangelicals have problems with SDAs for their teachings on the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, their idea of the remnant church, and, as some of their own scholars agree, their too-great emphasis on their own (short) tradition as a norm for interpreting the Bible (225). Evangelicals also generally question whether prophecy is such a special and permanent gift as the SDAs claim.

Gary Land is right: Adventism is in transition. The direction in which it is moving is encouraging. *Adventism in America* is perhaps the best up-to-date record of SDAs in North America.

Poverty and missions

Calcutta — City of joy

City of Joy, by Dominique LaPierre; translated from the French. New York City: Warner Communications, 1986. Paperback, 519 pp., $5.95. Reviewed by Helen Tangelder, Strathroy, Ontario.

Have you at any time started to read a book and couldn't put it down until you had finished it? That is what happened when I started to read LaPierre's descriptions of his life in the slums of Calcutta. From early life, he had the determination to be a missionary and with that in mind, he entered a Belgian seminary and after his ordination, his fraternity sent him to India, an assignment that was to leave an indelible mark on his life.

This biography is more than a bird's-eye view of poverty. A certain Father Kovalsky provides an in-depth study of his experience living right next door to the down and outers, the day-by-day, hour-by-hour account of existence in the grime and muck, living in squalor with no hope of escape or of ever leaving it.

One thing I appreciate about LaPierre is that he is sensationalistic. He does not give a "tourist point of view" or exaggerate the horrible living conditions. What the reader sees in the leper settlements on Constitution Hill, north of Manila, in the hovels behind the Central Market in Bacolod City, the devastating typhoons, the graft, the beggars, the stinking conditions of the provincial hospital has its counterpart in worse conditions in the "City of Joy."

Through the eyes of the priest, and the hands of a Dr. Max, the reader feels the heart-throb of the families and the crowds as they struggle to eke out an existence, and the constant struggling with the very complex system of dealing with the swindlers and traffickers who will do anything for a rupee — even find a market for selling skeletons. Doesn't Timothy say that the love of money is the root of all evil?

What courage and love it has taken for people like the priest Kovalski and Mother Theresa (yes, she is mentioned in the book) to give up a much more comfortable life and to give their all to help the abandoned and the helpless. The work continues. Societies have been set up to bring relief to the holes of Calcutta and to bring some kind of joy into these barren lives.

If you would like an in-depth study of poverty and of Hinduism, or if you've thought about doing some kind of mission work among the poor, this book will be required reading. One thing, though, it is not bedtime reading, for there are scenes that may give you some sleepless hours.

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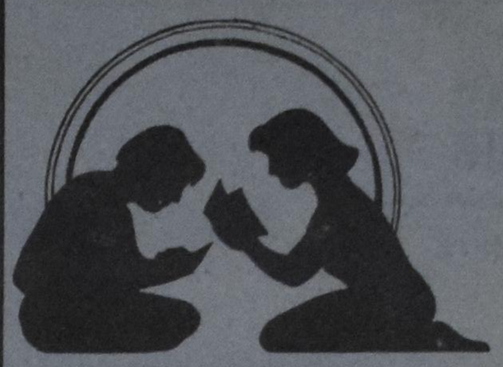

Friends of God

Wayne Brouwer

The Bible (V)

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings ...." **(Acts 2:42)**

Somehow each of the four views of the Bible we've looked at during the last weeks seems to limit it and make it much smaller than we know it is for us. Certainly the Bible has authoritative doctrinal statements, but is that *all* it is? Yes, the testimonies of religious people like David and Paul are a big part of the Bible's pages, but obviously scripture is more than that. True, what God did in past times is recorded in scripture, but we can't ignore that it is more than history; the songs and prayers and meditations and instructions and geneologies are there as well. And limiting revelation to a personal encounter with God makes the Bible no more special than any "cheap gospel thriller" that talks about how an individual met Christ.

Jesus' testimony

There's a story at the end of Luke's gospel that helps us see the Bible more clearly. As Jesus meets with his disciples after his resurrection he says to them, "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

In summary form, Jesus is saying two things to us about the Bible: (1) it is a covenant book, and (2) its message focuses on Jesus Christ.

What does it mean that the Bible is a covenant book? Remember that what we know as the Old Testament was the whole Bible in Jesus' day. And when he speaks of the three sections of his Bible, he is reminding us of the three major kinds of literature in the scriptures: (1) it all begins with an act of redemption in which God's covenant with his people is established; (2) it continues with the authorized instructions of God's chosen and called spokespersons, the prophets, who regulate Israel's faith life according to the covenant; and (3) it culminates in the wise and joyful and responsive songs and prayer and wisdom of the community of faith, confirming and deepening trust in the God of the covenant.

A three-fold cord

If you want to put it simply, there are three major kinds of covenant documents in Jesus' Bible:
- those surrounding God's redemptive acts in bringing Israel from Egypt ("the Law");
- those recording the history lessons and sermons of God's messengers ("the Prophets");
- those filled with the responses of God's people to his covenant love ("the Psalms," Proverbs and other writings).

And as much as this is true of the Old Testament, so it is also true of the New Testament:
- the Gospels record the great saving act of God in Jesus Christ;
- Acts and the letters of the apostles are the authorized teachings of God through his appointed messengers;
- and a book like Revelation confirms the faith of God's covenant people struggling with their faith in a hostile world.

Establishing, directing, confirming

Jesus' first lesson to us, when we ask about the Bible, is like that to his disciples: it is a covenant book which spells out how God established his covenant relationship with me, which keeps me living in his covenant through the instructions of his servants the prophets and apostles, and which gives me deeper insights into my relationship with him through the wisdom of the Psalms and Proverbs and the strength of Revelation's pictures.

Don't throw the Bible into a theological blender and make it all come out the same. Don't play "Bible Roulette": blindly opening the Bible and pointing with a finger to find God's will for your life. Don't play "Proof-Text Trivia": trying to hand various doctrines on the hook of a single text.

The Bible is a covenant book, opening up to us the grand historical sweep of God's redemptive work in our world and in our lives.

Next week we'll look at its focus on Jesus Christ.

Wayne Brouwer is a pastor at First Christian Reformed Church in London, Ont.